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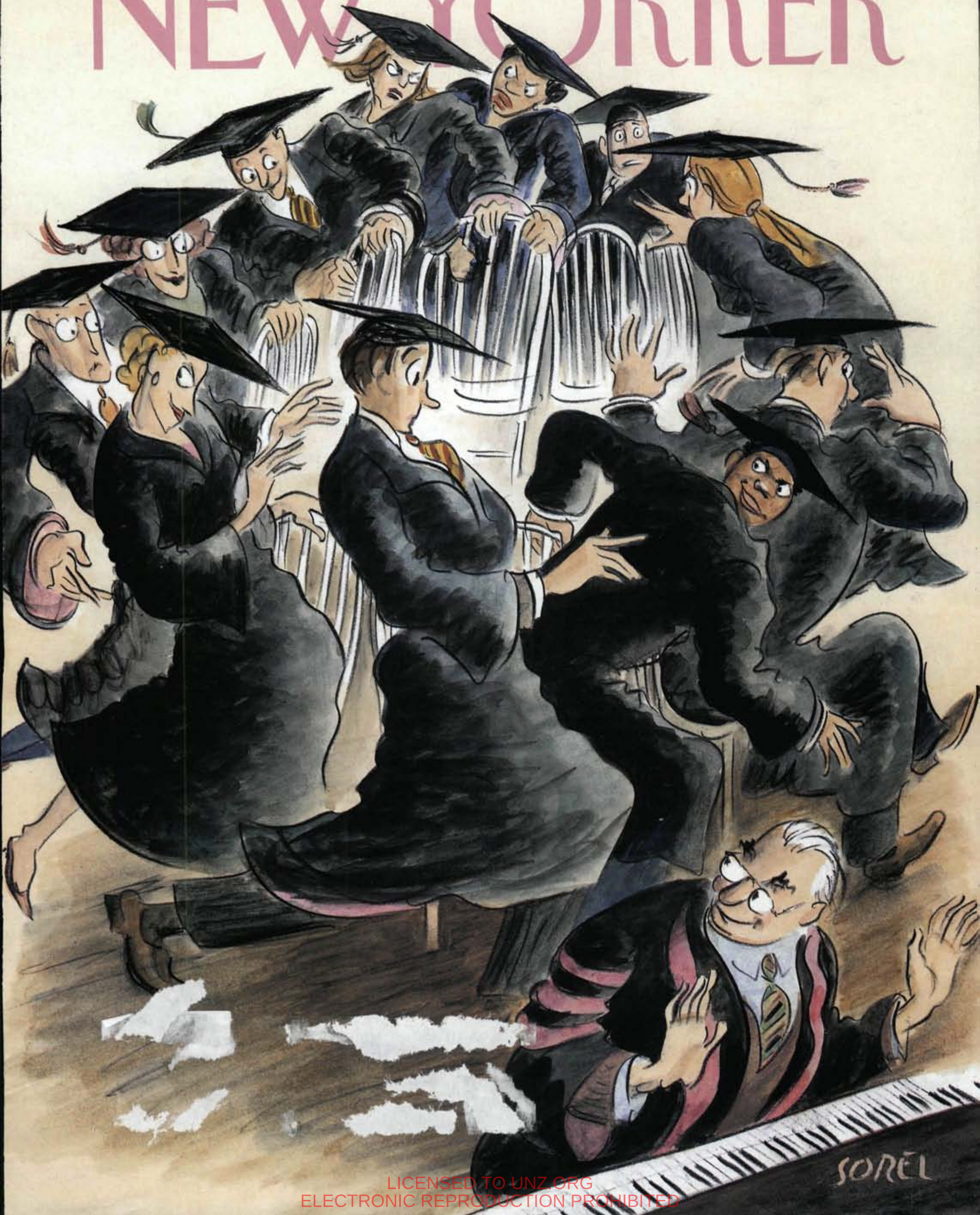
JUNE 5, 2006



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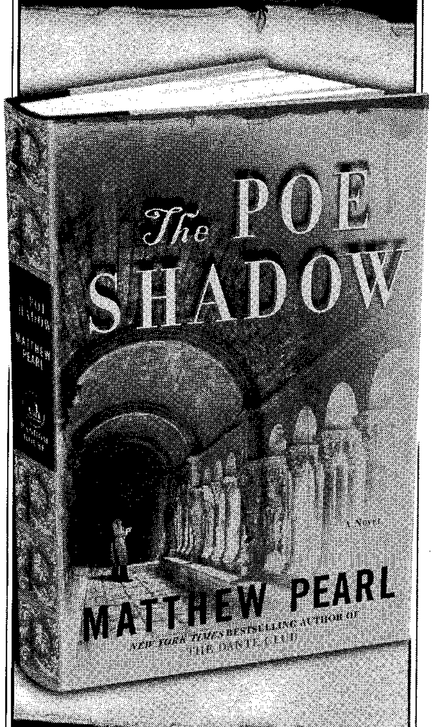

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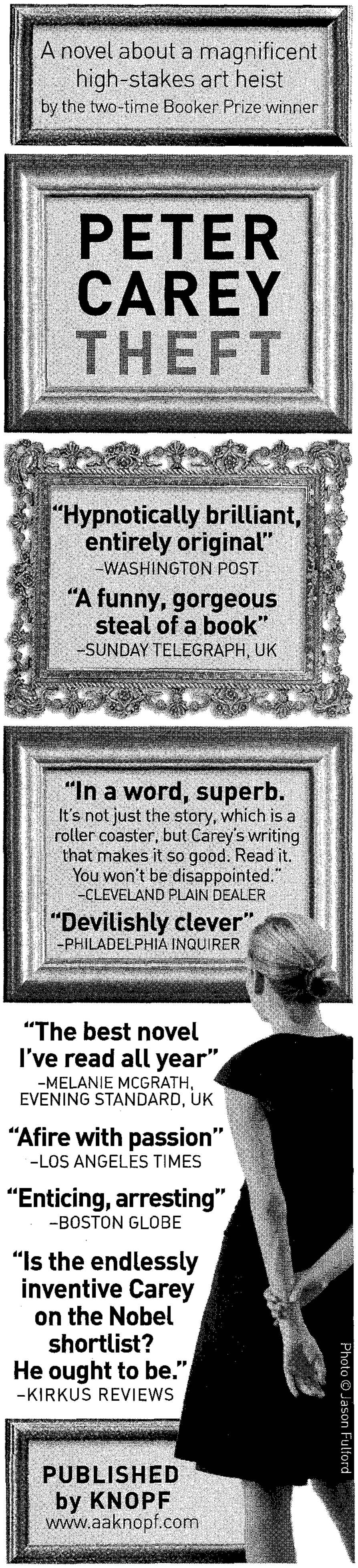

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-PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

"The best novel I've read all year"
-MELANIE MCGRATH, EVENING STANDARD, UK

"Afire with passion"
-LOS ANGELES TIMES

"Enticing, arresting"
-BOSTON GLOBE

"Is the endlessly inventive Carey on the Nobel shortlist? He ought to be."
-KIRKUS REVIEWS

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Nora Ephron ("Moving On," p. 34) is a writer and film director. She will publish a book of essays, "I Feel Bad About My Neck," in August.

Margaret Talbot ("The Agitator," p. 58) is a staff writer and a Senior Fellow at the New America Foundation.

Alec Wilkinson (The Talk of the Town, p. 31) is a longtime contributor to the magazine.

Adam Gopnik (A Critic at Large, p. 80) has a new book, "Through the Children's Gate: A Home in New York," coming out in the fall.

David Denby (The Current Cinema, p. 90) is a film critic for the magazine. He is the author of "Great Books" and "American Sucker."

Rosanna Warren (Poem, p. 36) has published four collections of poems, including, most recently, "Departure."

Mark Singer ("Stringer's Way," p. 46) has been a staff writer since 1974. He is the author of five books, including "Character Studies: Encounters with the Curiously Obsessed."

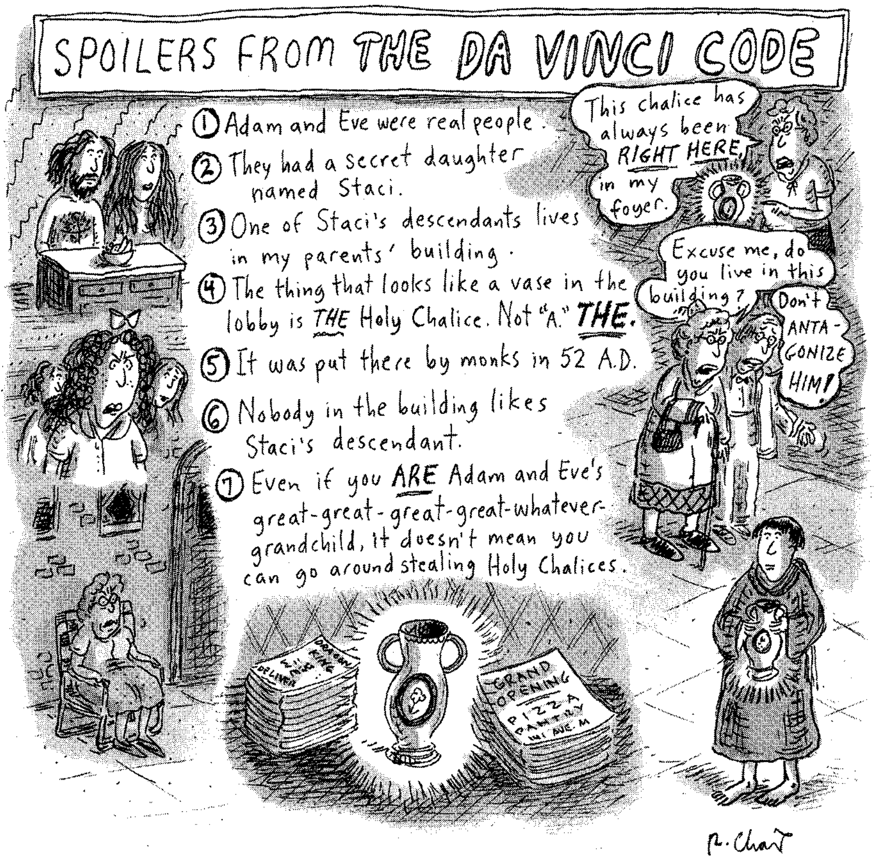
Alice Munro (Fiction, p. 68) will publish a new collection of stories, "The View from Castle Rock," in November.

Steve Coll (Comment, p. 27) won a Pulitzer Prize for "Ghost Wars," a book about the C.I.A. and Afghanistan, which is available in paperback.

Landis Everson (Poem, p. 74) will publish her first collection of poems, "Everything Preserved: Poems 1955-2005," this fall.

Hanna Rosin ("Life Lessons," p. 40) is currently writing a book about young evangelicals.

Sasha Frere-Jones (Pop Music, p. 86) is the magazine's pop-music critic. ♦


SPOILERS FROM THE DA VINCI CODE
① Adam and Eve were real people.
② They had a secret daughter named Staci.
③ One of Staci's descendants lives in my parents' building.
④ The thing that looks like a vase in the lobby is THE Holy Chalice. Not "A." THE.
⑤ It was put there by monks in 52 A.D.
⑥ Nobody in the building likes Staci's descendant.
⑦ Even if you ARE Adam and Eve's great-great-great-great-whatever-grandchild, it doesn't mean you can go around stealing Holy Chalices.
This chalice has always been RIGHT HERE, in my foyer.
Excuse me, do you live in this building?
Don't ANTAGONIZE HIM!
GRAND OPENING PIZZA PANTRY
R. Chast

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Sasha Frere-Jones talks about why British pop doesn't always thrive on this side of the pond.

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LIBYA'S DISSIDENTS

Andrew Solomon accurately depicts Libya as a police state where Colonel Muammar Qaddafi controls all levers of power, but there is little hope that his son, Saif, will actually see through the reforms he purports to champion ("Circle of Fire," May 8th). Saif's self-described human-rights organization is funded by the state, and his human-rights record speaks for itself; his description of terrorism as "tactics" could hardly be termed a renunciation. More space in Solomon's piece might have been devoted to those Libyan dissidents who are imprisoned or were killed because they advocated for justice and spoke the truth—such as some twelve hundred political prisoners, who were executed in June, 1996, at the Abu Sleem prison, and the journalist Daif al-Ghazal, whose mutilated body was found in Benghazi in June, 2005, and whose death still has not been investigated.

Mohamed Eljahmi
Chelmsford, Mass.

DOGS BEHAVING BADLY

In his article on Cesar Millan, Malcolm Gladwell notes that "dogs are students of human movement" ("What the Dog Saw," May 22nd). Implicit in this assertion is the fact that dogs know that we are not dogs, a point the ethologist and recognized canine behavioral expert Patricia McConnell, whom Gladwell refers to in the article, makes in her book "The Other End of the Leash." Why, then, does Millan insist on using an archaic interpretation of "pack theory" to describe dog-human relations? Millan proclaims that dog owners must be "pack leaders." He mimics a dog's mouth with his hands, and uses "alpha rollovers," a technique that has been disavowed by those who first recommended its use. Gladwell's article skirts the content of Millan's teachings, and focusses instead on how Millan moves. This is an interesting take on the "Dog Whisperer," but it also runs the risk of validating Millan's position as a behavioral expert. It might have been worth mentioning that Dr. Nicholas Dodman, the director of the Animal Behavior Clinic at Tufts University's Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, told the *Times*, "My college thinks it is a travesty. We've written to National Geographic Channel and told them they have put dog training back twenty years."

Eric Goebelbecker
Maywood, N.J.

HOME INSURANCE

James Surowiecki, in his article on home-price insurance, justly praises efforts to build a financial market that would provide individuals with a way to hedge against a decrease in the value of their houses (The Financial Page, May 8th). However, home owners who intend to live in their houses for the rest of their lives are already largely insured against movement in housing prices. A decrease in the value of your house also decreases the cost of living in it, because it reduces the income you forgo by not selling it or renting it out. This greatly cushions any risk associated with housing-price volatility. While housing futures are still potentially valuable as insurance (e.g., for those who intend to use their home equity for retirement income or those anticipating a move), analysis of the housing-price risk is sorely incomplete without recognition of the fact that most home owners are only mildly exposed to this risk.

Emir Kamenica
Department of Economics
Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass.

•

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. They can also be faxed to 212-286-5047. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. All letters become the property of The New Yorker and will not be returned; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.

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Burlesque at Galapagos, in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
BUSY LADY

The actress Jill Clayburgh—who appeared last fall in "A Naked Girl on the Appian Way" and just finished a run in "Barefoot in the Park" on Broadway—now stars in "The Busy World Is Hushed," a drama by Keith Bunin about a minister and Bible scholar (Clayburgh) and her obdurate son. (See page 10.)

NIGHT LIFE
FAMILY VALUES

James Luther Dickinson—also known as the veteran Memphis-based producer Jim Dickinson—makes a rare visit to town. He's at Joe's Pub, backed by Chris Chew, on bass, and his sons, Cody, on drums, and Luther, on guitar. Expect two nights of Southern-fried party music, with the occasional protest song thrown in for good measure. (See page 12.)

ART
BUILDING UP

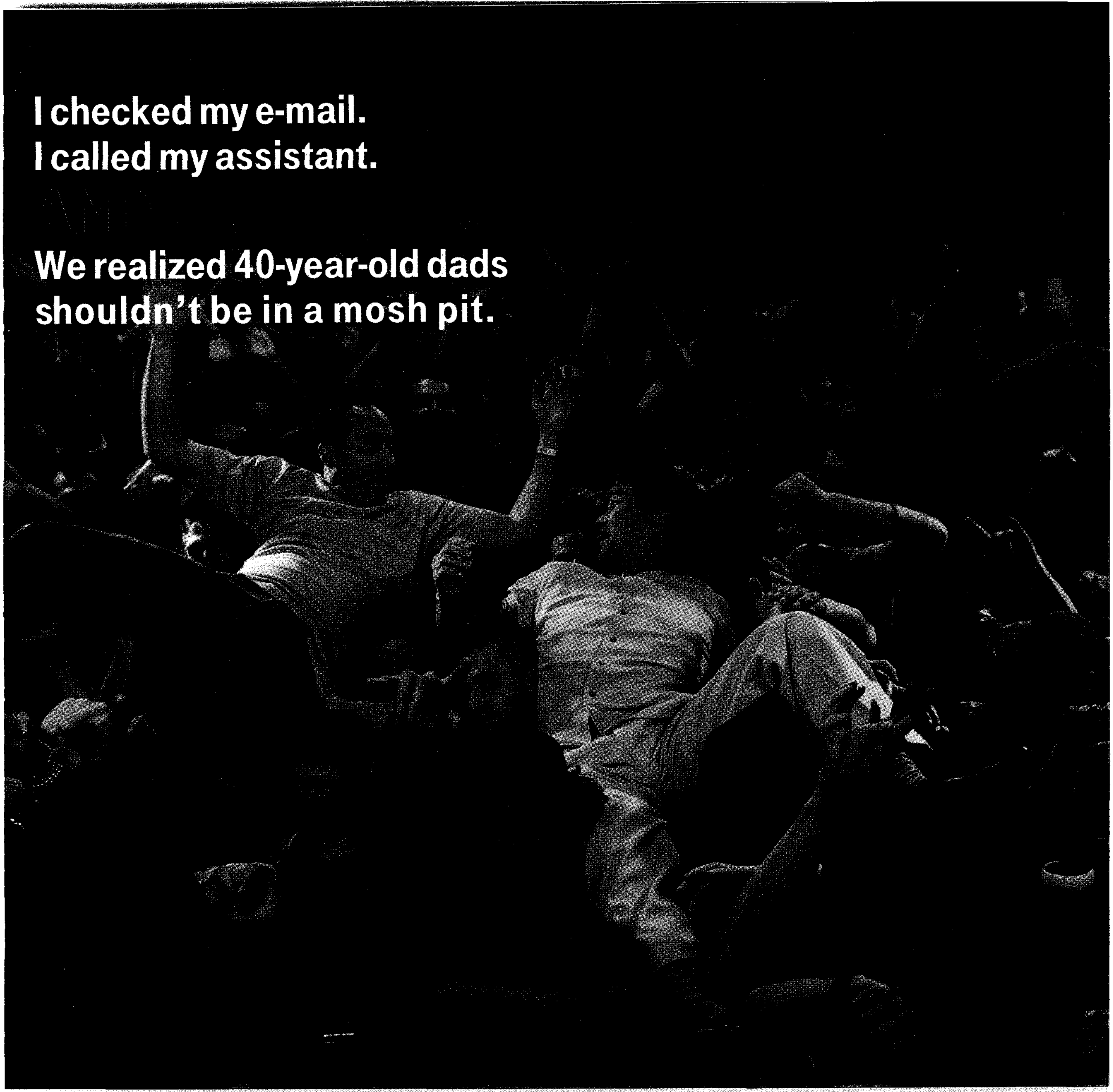
The visionary architect Zaha Hadid, who was born in Baghdad and is now based in London, has designed everything from ski jumps to art museums, including Cincinnati's new Contemporary Arts Center. She is also the subject of a survey at the Guggenheim. Photographs, models, and sketches of her architectural projects share the space with paintings, which free her from the usual constraints of materials, practicality, and gravity. (See page 14.)

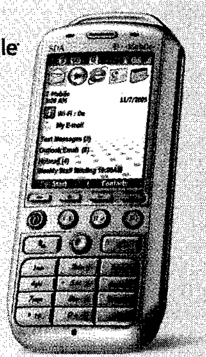
CLASSICAL MUSIC
FINISHING UP

The New York Philharmonic's season closes this week with a program in which Lorin Maazel conducts works by Elliott Carter and Stravinsky (featuring the French pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard) and Berlioz. (See page 20.)

MOVIES
SUMMER ICE

Whether he was filming a racetrack heist ("The Killing") or the Vietnam War ("Full Metal Jacket"), the Bronx-born Stanley Kubrick epitomized directorial megalomania and lent a glacial chill to all of his subjects. A nearly complete retrospective of Kubrick's films opens this week at Moving Image with the coldest work of all, "2001: A Space Odyssey," in a restored 70-mm print. (See page 23.)


I checked my e-mail.
I called my assistant.
We realized 40-year-old dads shouldn't be in a mosh pit.



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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ARABIAN NIGHT
Trip Cullman directs this urban fairy tale by Roland Schimmelpfennig, in which five strangers converge on a summer evening. In previews. (East 13th Street Theatre, 136 E. 13th St. 212-279-4200.)

BURLEIGH GRIME$
Wendie Malick and Mark Moses star in a new comedy by Roger Kirby, about a Wall Street up-and-comer. With music by David Yazbek. David Warren directs. In previews. (New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE BUSY WORLD IS HUSHED
Jill Clayburgh stars in a new play by Keith Bunin, in which the buried past of a theologian is discovered. Mark Brokaw ("The Constant Wife") directs. Previews begin June 6. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

ELVIS AND JULIET
The New York première of a new comedy by Mary Willard, about the crazy families of a couple getting married. Fred Willard stars. Previews begin June 2. (June Havoc, 312 W. 36th St. 212-868-4444.)

THE FIELD
The Irish Repertory Theatre presents John B. Keane's drama, about a farmer fighting for the land he has nurtured. Directed by Ciarán O'Reilly. In previews. Opens June 1. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

THE HOUSE IN TOWN
Richard Greenberg's new play examines the marriage of a couple living on Millionaires' Row in Manhattan in 1929. Doug Hughes directs. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

THE PORCH
A new comedy by Kari Floren, about three off-kilter guests of a bed-and-breakfast. Previews begin June 2. Opens June 4. (Altered Stages, 212 W. 29th St. 212-279-4200.)

SATELLITES
Michael Greif directs a new play by Diana Son, about an interracial couple who move into a gentrifying Brooklyn neighborhood. The ensemble cast includes Sandra Oh. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

SOME GIRL(S)
Maura Tierney, Eric McCormack, and Fran Drescher star in a new play by Neil LaBute, about a man who visits four former girlfriends before getting engaged. Directed by Jo Bonney. In previews. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

SPRING AWAKENING
Atlantic Theatre Company presents the world première of a new musical adapted from Frank Wedekind's novel about the secret lives of teen-agers. With music by Duncan Sheik and book and lyrics by Steven Sater. Michael Mayer directs. In previews. (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

STOPPING TRAFFIC
The Vineyard premières a one-woman show written by and starring Mary Pat Gleason. Lonny Price directs. In previews. (108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)

SUMMERWORKS 2006
Clubbed Thumb's annual festival of new plays kicks off with Anne Washburn's drama "I Have Loved Strangers." Begins June 4. (Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 212-352-3101.)

SUSAN AND GOD
The Mint Theatre Company revives Rachel Crothers's 1937 play, about a newly religious socialite who attempts to convert those around her. Previews begin June 6. (311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

THE WATER'S EDGE
Kate Burton and Tony Goldwyn star in a new play by Theresa Rebeck, in which a woman and her children are paid an unwelcome visit by her ex-husband. Directed by Will Frears. In previews. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

NOW PLAYING

COLUMBINUS
The United States Theatre Project, helmed by P. J. Paparelli, examines the 1999 shootings at Columbine High School using primary sources from the scene of the massacre—journal entries, video footage, interview transcripts—and filling in the gaps with fiction. For all its excavation work, the piece has few new insights to offer into the tragedy or the alienated lives of American high-school students. It is wonderfully staged and acted, though, and once the play begins to tap the nihilistic mischief-making of the two young murderers it releases a gush of raw theatrical heat. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

T Bone Burnett pays a visit to Town Hall on June 1.

JASHAR AWAN

DARK YELLOW
Studio Dante presents a world première of a noir drama by Julia Jordan, which centers on a murder in a cornfield. Nick Sandow directs. (257 W. 29th St. 212-868-4444.)

ENSEMBLE STUDIO THEATRE'S MARATHON 2006
The twenty-eighth annual festival of new one-act plays includes eleven premières and work by David Mamet, Stephen Adly Guirgis, Will Eno, and Amy Fox. (Ensemble Studio Theatre, 549 W. 52nd St. 212-352-3101.)

HERAKLES VIA PHAEDRA
The myths of Theseus and the Minotaur, Herakles the strongman, and Phaedra the seductress are woven together in a great, big, gorgeous piece of dance-theatre by LaMama's founder, Ellen Stewart (who directs, choreographs, and shares compositional credit with Genji Ito). Using terpsichorean storytelling and an Eastern-influenced score (sung by Cary Gant and Benjamin Marcantoni), the piece achieves an ambitious range of emotion, from the sly and sexy to the elegiac. When Herakles (Peter Case) sets out to perform twelve impossible labors, the talented dancers don masks to become each of his successive foes, including a muscular, menacing lion (Eugene the Poogene) and a chorus line of disdainful Amazon soubrettes, who indulge in some rollicking flamenco steps. This large-scale work made of wonderfully observed details is a sheer delight to watch. (LaMama Annex, 74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710.)

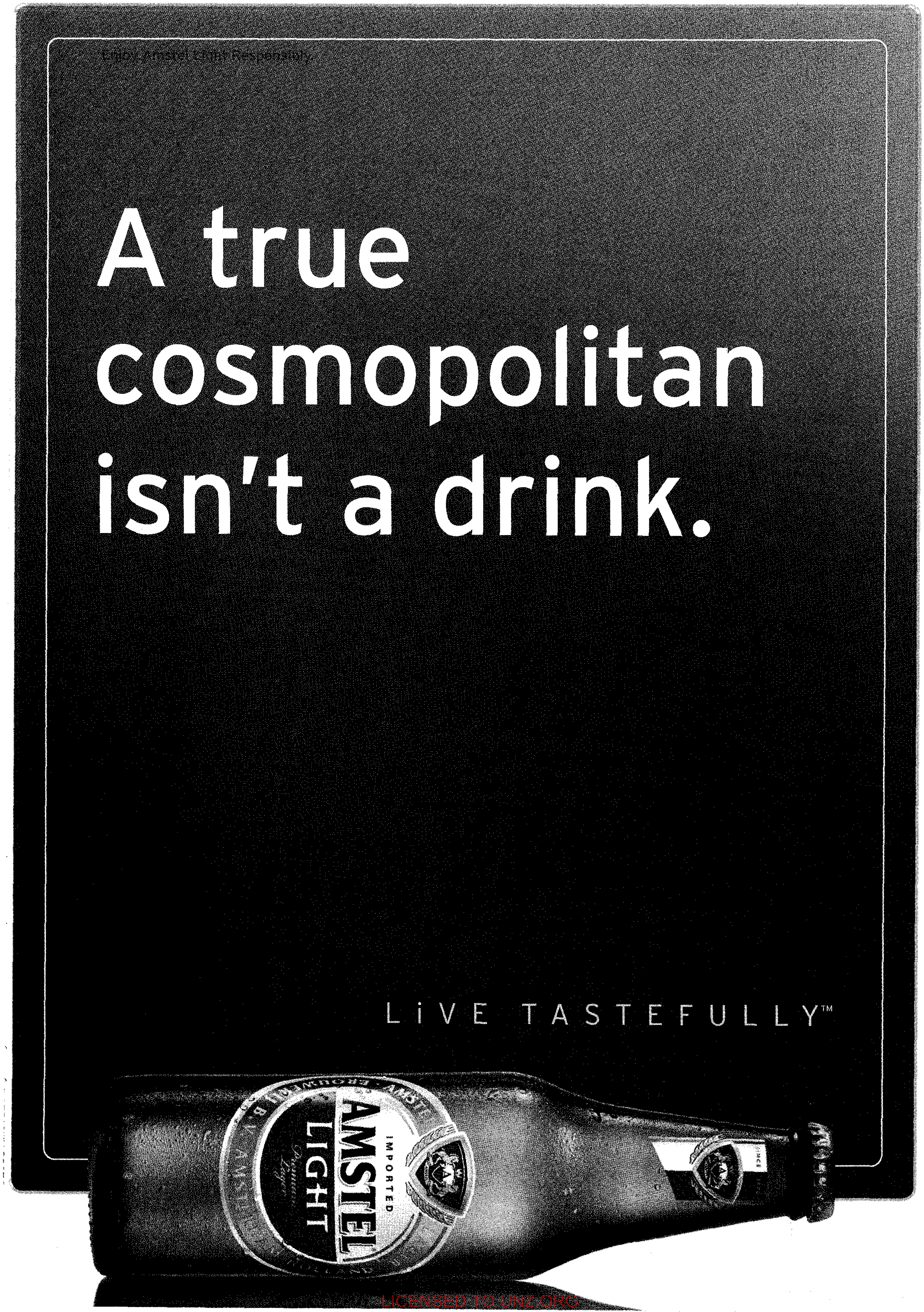
HOT FEET
Maurice Hines's ill-conceived new dance musical inexplicably pairs the macabre plot of the 1948 classic film "The Red Shoes" with a groovy, feel-good Earth, Wind & Fire soundtrack. The girl in the ruby sneakers is Kalimba (Vivian Nixon), whose backstory is a Broadway blend of "Fame" and "Faust." Naïve Kalimba dutifully dons her couture sweats and shimmies her way through the interminable dance numbers (mostly tired rehashings of eighties music-video material) while a wisecracking Hispanic Mephistopheles narrates her demise. But even death can't stop this fatuous dance party. (Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.)

LEE EVANS
The British comedian comes to 37 Arts with a new standup act. (450 W. 37th St. 212-560-8912. Through June 3.)

THE RACE
The English troupe Gecko uses a speeding treadmill as the central metaphor for the vertiginous emotions of a father-to-be (Amit Lahav). The stagecraft of the co-directors, Lahav and Al Nedjari, includes plenty of tiny crawl spaces, chutes, and ladders—all the better to show off the surreal prowess of this acrobatic five-person ensemble. Their work can be very funny, indeed (such as when horny Lahav, sighting an alluring stranger at a bar, lip-synchs to Nina Simone). The physical-theatre vocabulary explored here recalls the celebrated London troupe Complicite, but Gecko is less cerebral: "The Race" is a visceral, sweaty, movable feast. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through June 4.)

TARZAN
A stage adaptation of the Disney film, with a book by David Henry Hwang, songs by Phil Collins, and the vine-swinging wizardry of "De La Guarda"'s Pichón Baldinu. Bob Crowley steps into the role of designer-auteur, the job that Julie Taymor aced when she directed "The Lion King," but he doesn't have Taymor's instincts for linking visual innovation to storytelling, and the indulgent scene transitions, with their swarms of airborne jungle creatures, tend to have more life than the scenes themselves. Kids and adults alike may enjoy the displays of simian acrobatics, but in the end they'll wonder why the stage show retains so few of the movie's charms. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.)

TROIKA: GOD, TOLSTOY AND SOPHIA
The figure of the aged, sadly vexed Tolstoy (an astringent Mike Durell) emerges from Peter Levy's historical drama as strangely constrained, battered by the financial quarrels in his family and prevented from living up to his radical Christian ideals. His wife, Sophia (Catherine Hennessey portrays her as a full-blown hysteric), haggles over his posthumous royalties, while his grown daughter (Kristin Ledingham), publisher (Seth Rabinowitz), and physician (the fine Matt Hartwick) get him to sign a new will and testament, which will place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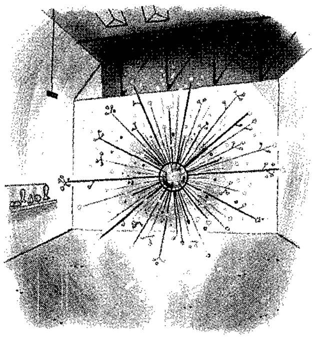
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
A GLASS HOUSE

By what right is Josiah McElheny, now showing at Andrea Rosen, a delightful artist? A thumbnail description of his art—conceptual longueurs in glass—suggests something encountered in one of the more lugubrious recent Whitney Biennials and, thank goodness, never again. But since scoring a hit in the 2000 Biennial with an esoteric jape—a suite of vases, inspired by Christian Dior's New Look, that might have been made at Murano in the late nineteen-forties but weren't—McElheny has done wonders with fastidiously crafted glass installations that channel the histories of art, design, and, now, science. A huge starburst chandelier diagrams a moment of the big bang and alludes to the Metropolitan Opera's rococo-modernist lighting. In a more typical work, mirrored vessels in Czech, Scandinavian, Austrian, and Italian modern styles inhabit mirrored cases that march their reflections into infinity. Besides being gorgeous, such things marry extreme braininess to what is generally the kitschiest of mediums. The consequent pleasure is a Reese Witherspoon effect: artistically blond.

—*Peter Schjeldahl*



MAURICE VELLEKOOP

his later works in the public domain. There is enough intricacy of plot in Levy's drama to fill out a good-sized nineteenth-century novel, but the cast succeeds only intermittently in bringing the characters to life. (13th Street Repertory, 50 W. 13th St. 212-352-3101.)

TROUT STANLEY
The American première of a drama by Claudia Dey, about twin girls living in the Canadian wild. Jen Wineman directs. (Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-868-4444.)

WAITING FOR GODOT
Classical Theatre of Harlem presents Samuel Beckett's masterpiece. Christopher McElroen directs. (HSA Theatre, 645 St. Nicholas Ave., near 141st St. 212-868-4444.)

Also Playing

AWAKE AND SING!: Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **BILLY CONNOLLY LIVE!:** 37 Arts, 450 W. 37th St. 212-307-4100. **CORTEO:** Randall's Island Park. 800-678-5440. Through June 4. **THE DROWSY CHAPERONE:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100. **FAITH HEALER:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE HISTORY BOYS:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **THE LIEUTENANT OF INISHMORE:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **NO CHILD . . . :** Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through June 4. **NOT A GENUINE BLACK MAN:** DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **THE PAJAMA GAME:** American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. **RED LIGHT WINTER:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **SWEENEY TODD:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **THE THREEPENNY OPERA:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300. **THE WEDDING SINGER:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

APOLLO THEATRE
253 W. 125th St. (212-531-5305)—June 1: Clifford (Tip) Harris, the chart-topping rapper and actor from Atlanta who goes by the name **T.I.**

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—June 2: The powerful funk of New Orleans's **Rebirth Brass Band.**

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (212-307-7171)—June 2: **Linda Ronstadt,** the onetime queen of country rock and one of the top-selling artists of the seventies, has teamed up with the Cajun-music singer and guitarist Ann Savoy. They have a new album, "Adieu False Heart," coming out later this month.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—June 2: **Cocorosie.** Sierra and Bianca Casady, the two sisters at the heart of this local outfit, share the raw vocal style of certain early female blues singers. They have a Continental flair (their first album was titled "La Maison de Mon Rêve") and favor dreamy arrangements and sparse accompaniment. June 3: **Prefuse 73** (one of the many aliases used by the experimental hip-hop producer Guillermo Scott Herren) crafts wide-ranging electronic music. June 4 and June 6: The up-and-coming Minneapolis band **Tapes 'N Tapes.**

BOWERY POETRY CLUB
308 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (212-614-0505)—The visual artist and singer **Andy Friedman** holds court on Thursdays through July 27.

BROOKLYN FIRE PROOF
101 Richardson St., Williamsburg (718-302-4702)—Last year, Tompkins Square Records put out "Imaginational Anthem," a fine collection of rare acoustic-guitar performances by old-time associates of John Fahey and contemporary players sympathetic to his pioneering approach. Next week, the label is releasing "Imaginational Anthem: Volume 2," and a few of its contributors—**Sharron Kraus, James Blackshaw,** and **Jesse Sparhawk**—are on tour, with a stop on June 3 at this intimate second-floor gallery and performance space, situated above a hospital-supply warehouse. The performance is part of a concert-series accompanying "Folk," an exhibition of Alan Lomax's photography, films, and writings, which runs through Aug. 6.

CONTINENTAL AIRLINES ARENA
East Rutherford, N.J. (212-307-7171)—June 1 and June 3: **Pearl Jam,** the last band standing from the upper echelons of grunge royalty, has outlived both Nirvana and Soundgarden (absorbing the drummer from the latter). Their profile may be a bit lower these days, but their fans are no less passionate. They love the band for its conviction and its lefty politics. With the youngsters in **My Morning Jacket.**

GALAPAGOS
70 North 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-782-5188)—The first Monday of the month: **Murray Hill,** the self-described "hardest-working middle-aged man in show business," hosts an amateur burlesque contest.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—June 3: For more than two decades, **Avion Travel** (formerly Piccola Orchestra Avion Travel) has blended traditional tunes from its native Italy with electronic music, tango, indie rock, and northeastern-Brazilian *baião*. The six-piece Caserta-based orchestra is a cult favorite, and it is currently recording a set of Paolo Conte songs, with the help of the singer himself. June 5-6: **James Luther Dickinson** is the stage name for the gruff-voiced, barrel-chested piano player and legendary Memphis-based producer Jim Dickinson. He's back with a new solo album, "Jungle Jim and the Voodoo Tiger," which is only his third in more than three decades. Backed by his sons, **Cody** and **Luther,** among others, Dickinson delivers roadhouse fun with a sawdust-in-your-eye swagger. Here Cody, Luther, and the bassist **Chris Chew** (otherwise known as the North Mississippi Allstars) will provide the support.

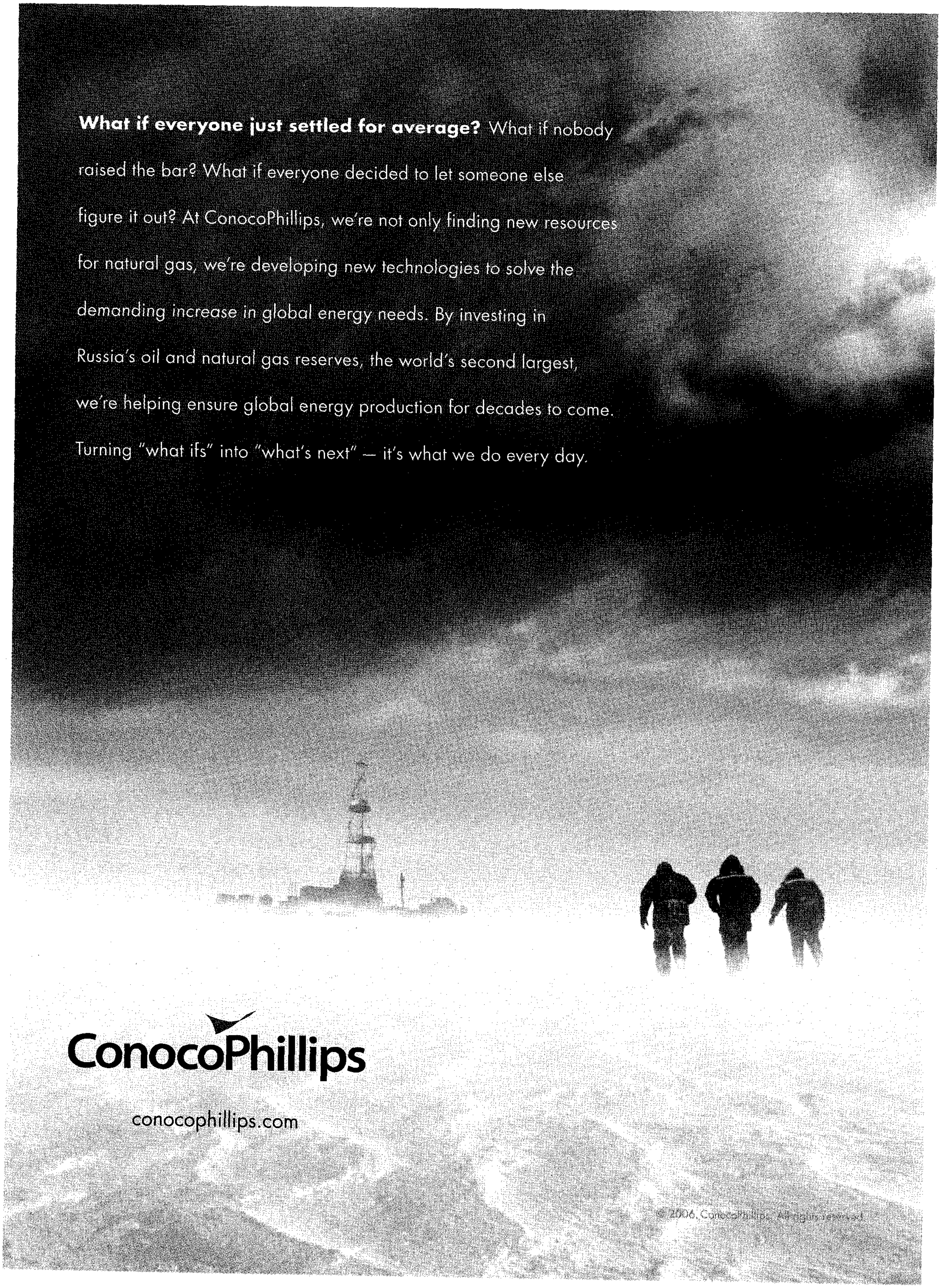
LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
47th Ave. at Van Dam St., Long Island City, Queens (718-482-5151)—June 3: **Salman Ahmad,** the founder of the Pakistani rock group Junoon (Urdu for "passion"), performs a solo show.

"LET'S ZYDECO"
June 3: The concert series dedicated to the Southern dance music presents the accordionist **Roy Carrier,** the owner of the Off-Shore Lounge, an epicenter of zydeco in Lawtell, Louisiana. (Connolly's, 121 W. 45th St. For more information, call 212-685-7597 or visit www.letszydeco.com.)

RIVER TO RIVER FESTIVAL
June 1: A bluegrass show with **Ricky Skaggs** and **Kentucky Thunder, Andy Statman, Carrie Rodriguez,** and **Citigrass.** (Castle Clinton, Battery Park.) June 2: The neo-psychedelic art rock of the **Super Furry Animals.** (Pier 17, South Street Seaport.) June 4: The **Bang on a Can Marathon** features ten hours of classical, electronica, jazz, and indie rock in the World Financial Center's Winter Garden (see Classical Music). (For more information about the festival, visit www.rivertorivernyc.com.)

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—June 5: **Sharron Kraus, James Blackshaw,** and **Jesse Sparhawk** (see Brooklyn Fire Proof).

TOWN HALL
123 W. 43rd St. (212-840-2824)—June 1: **T Bone Burnett,** who is fifty-eight, bought his first studio when he was just a teen-ager, and the tall, lanky one has since spent more time behind the boards than in front of an audience, producing albums for a number of artists, including Elvis Costello, the Counting Crows, and his wife, Sam Phillips, as well as creating one of the most successful soundtracks of all time, for the 2001 film "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" He



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started the seventies with a solo album, went on to play guitar with Bob Dylan's Rolling Thunder Revue, and then formed a spinoff from that experience called the Alpha Band. In the eighties, he released a series of solo records that garnered him a cult following. This tour, his first in nearly two decades, comes with the release of a long-awaited new solo album, "The True False Identity."

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—June 3: The Australian power trio **Wolfmother** pairs the brawn of heavy metal with the sprawling vistas of psychedelic and progressive rock. Their high-volume pastiche of oft-ridiculed seventies rock memes may not be for everyone, but their devotion to the cause is beyond reproach. With the Louisiana swamp gothic of **Deadboy & the Elephantmen.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—May 31-June 3: The pianist **Arturo O'Farrill,** taking a break from leading Lincoln Center's Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra, fronts a new sextet, Riza Negra, which features the vibraphonist **Dave Samuels** on the last three nights.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—May 30-June 4: **Betty Buckley** and Quintessence, featuring **Kenny Werner.** You can usually find this classy vocal interpreter in upscale cabarets, but she hits an upscale jazz joint this week. Werner, her longtime pianist, is a peerless player in his own right who will provide a firm link between the two musical worlds.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through June 3, the vocalist **Maria Friedman.**

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—May 30-June 4: The trombonist **Wycliffe Gordon** has a passion for New Orleans jazz in all its permutations, which is sure to mesh well with his guest drummer **Herlin Riley,** a scion of the Big Easy.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—May 30-June 10: **James Naughton** has the voice of a fine actor, investing lyrics with expressive weight and extracting humor with a light touch.

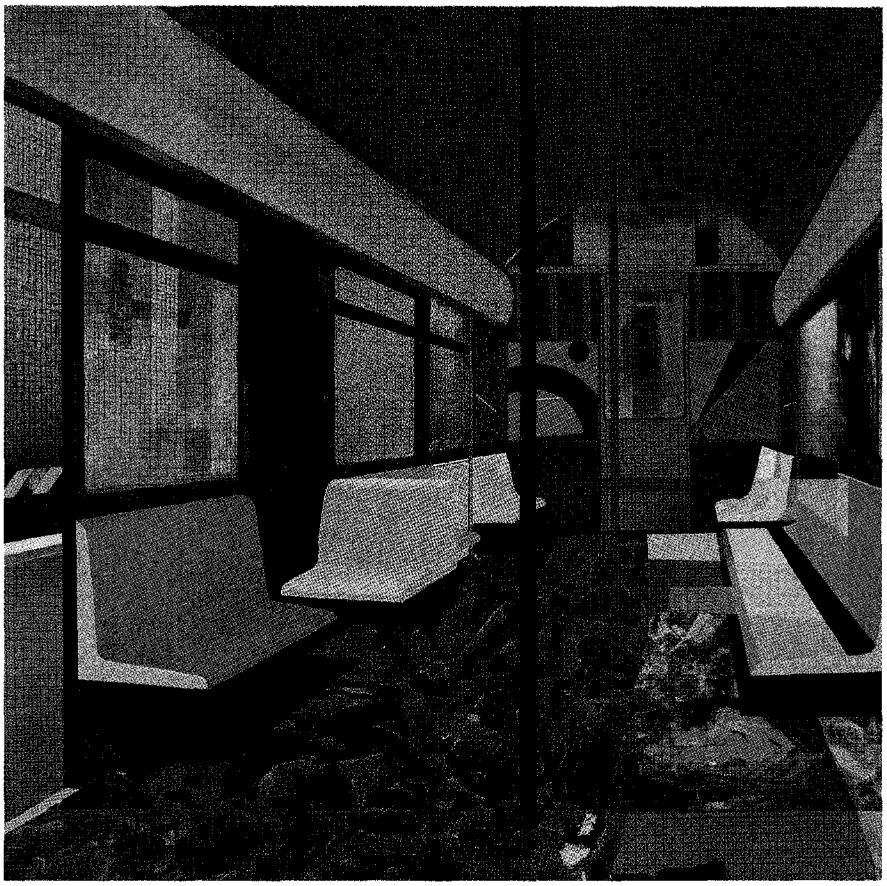
IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—May 31-June 4: The **Kurt Rosenwinkel Group,** with **Mark Turner** on saxophone. The guitarist Rosenwinkel performs best in the presence of his steady partner, Turner, an uncommon player who shares his ability to blend the cerebral and the lyrical. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
The action moves uptown to the Apollo Theatre on June 5, when J.A.L.C. holds its spring benefit. **Bernie Mac** is the host, and a slew of R. & B., pop, and jazz performers are expected, including **Tracy Chapman, Joe Cocker, Ahmad Jamal, John Legend, John Mayer, Natalie Merchant,** and **Wynton Marsalis.** (253 W. 125th St. For more information, call 212-721-6500.)

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—June 2: The cabaret singer **Theo Bleckmann** may have refined his style to the point of preciousness, but his intelligence and versatility keep him from going over the edge. He joins his pianist and arranger **Fumio Yasuda** (as well as a string quartet led by the violinist **Todd Reynolds**) to celebrate the release of their new album, "Las Vegas Rhapsody: The Night They Invented Champagne," a pink-fizz tribute to the golden age of Sin City, featuring songs by Frank Loesser, Rodgers and Hammerstein, and Lerner and Loewe.

SYMPHONY SPACE
Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—June 1: The composer and arranger **David Berger** stops by with his band, the **Sultans of Swing,** for a night of music from their new album, "Hindustan," a celebration of the old-school big-band tonalities for which Berger has an innate feel.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—May 30-June 4: The **Eric Reed** quartet. Reed, a talented and historically informed pianist, got his start with Wynton Marsalis, but he's found an identity and a following beyond the shadow of his old boss. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.



Michael Perrone's acrylic-on-aluminum paintings are at Steinberg, in Chelsea.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Girodet: Romantic Rebel,"** a retrospective of paintings and works on paper by the French artist Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson (1767-1824). Through Aug. 27. ♦ **"The Art of Betty Woodman,"** a retrospective of ceramic pieces from throughout the artist's career. Through July 30. ♦ **"Cai Guo-Qiang on the Roof: Transparent Monument."** The roof garden has reopened for the summer, with four sculptural works by the Chinese-born artist. Among them are "Clear Sky Black Cloud," a timed gunpowder explosion that produces a small cloud of smoke over Central Park each day at noon. Through Oct. 29. ♦ **"Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh."** Through July 9. ♦ **"Kara Walker at the Met: After the Deluge."** Through July 30. ♦ **"Anglo-Mania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion"** fills the English period galleries with mannequins dressed in costumes old and new, transforming the rooms into elaborate surreal tableaux. Mods mingle with dandies at a hunt ball, punks mix it up with dames in a drawing room, and the show as a whole conveys the interconnectedness and the bizarreness of both class and fashion. Through Sept. 4. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Against the Grain: Contemporary Art from the Edward R. Broida Collection."** These selections from Broida's storeroom buck the tedium of private-collection exhibitions that merely ape museum trends. Instead, the architect-collector (who died earlier this spring) displayed a distinct sensibility, a bent toward poeticism that manifests itself in the work through ideas and materials. Bruce Nauman's "Seven Virtues/Seven Vices" includes limestone slabs with engraved words superimposed ("Envy/Hope"; "Justice/Avarice"), so they compete, both visually and spiritually, as it were, for our allegiance. Materials are key for Wolfgang Laib, whose rice-and-marble sculpture stands near Giuseppe Penone's canvas studded with acacia thorns. Philip Guston reënacts, in his paintings, the heroic battle between abstraction and representation, and Jennifer Bartlett's nine-hundred-and-eighty-seven-panel "Rhapsody" (1975-76) infuses the minimalist grid with romantic icons such as mountains, trees, and oceans. Through July 10. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"No Limits, Just Edges: Jackson Pollock Paintings on Paper"** may force a shift in perceptions of the Action painter: on a smaller scale, his Ab Ex swagger registers as more delicate and intimate. The show ranges from Pollock's earliest sketches to late, experimental works. Through Sept. 29. ♦ **"Zaha Hadid,"** a retrospective of work by the Pritzker Prize-winning visionary architect, who was born in Baghdad in 1950. Opens June 3. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—The fourth and fifth floors of **"Day for Night,"** the 2006 Biennial, have closed to start making way for the Whitney's seventy-fifth-anniversary exhibition, but most of the show, including works by Pierre Huyghe and

T. Kelly Mason and Diana Thater, is still on view. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Darwin"** traces the discoveries and influence of the great naturalist (1809-82) with, among other things, a re-creation of his study, samples of fossils he collected, and live specimens of tortoises, frogs, and iguanas like those that he encountered in the Galápagos Islands. Through Aug. 20. ♦ **"The Butterfly Conservatory."** Through June 23. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—J. Alfred Prufrock measured out his life in coffee spoons. Others may have used muddlers, ladles, scoops, skimmers, oyster forks, sugar tongs, grape scissors, corn-kernel rakes, or silver ice-cream hatchets—all of which are displayed in **"Feeding Desire: Design and the Tools of the Table, 1500-2005."** Seventeenth-century knife-and-fork sets in personal carrying cases of tooled leather; airline flatware with mod, rounded corners; and a plastic "spoon-o-brush" that can be used for both eating and tooth-cleaning are also on hand. Materials range from sharkskin to Bakelite, and there's a video of silverware being cast in a delicate forge. Through Oct. 29. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5, Fridays, 10 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, noon to 6.)

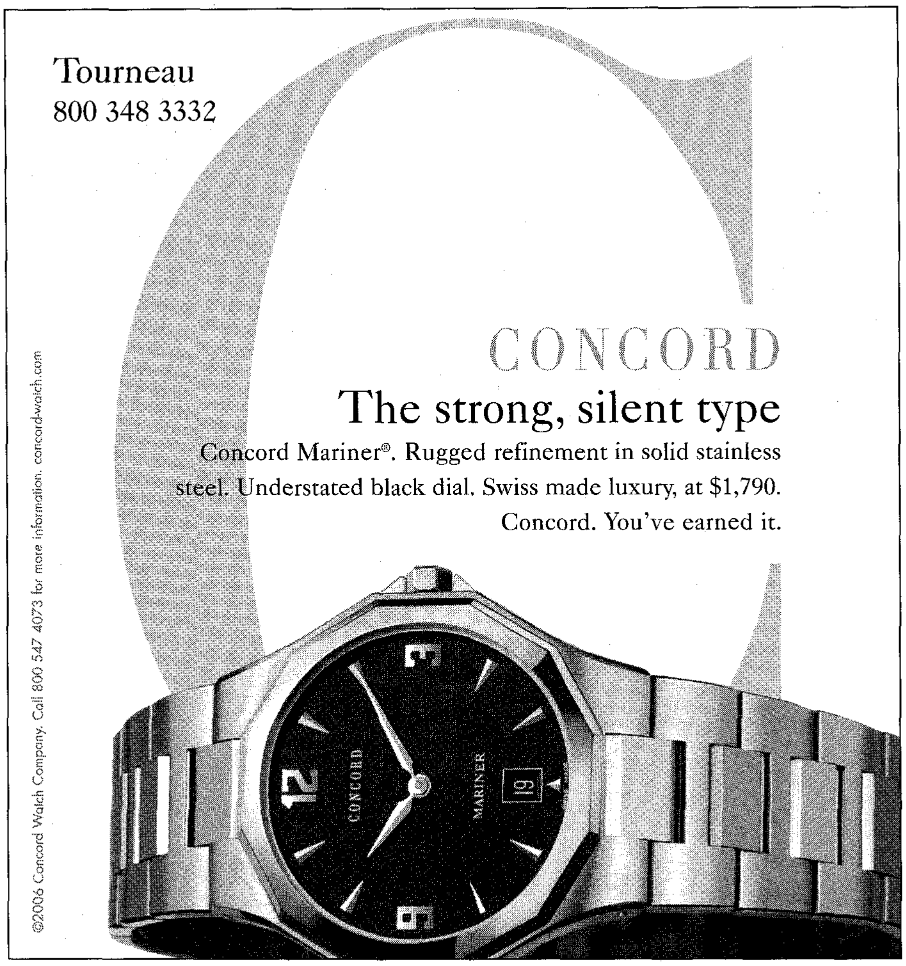
DRAWING CENTER
35 Wooster St. (212-219-2166)—**"Eva Hesse: Drawing."** Through July 15. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 6, and Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—Two great shows about five miles apart—**"Eva Hesse: Sculpture"** uptown, **"Eva Hesse: Drawing"** downtown—add up to an overdue New York retrospective for the lyrical post-minimalist, who died in 1970. At the Jewish Museum, works in fibreglass, latex, and other then-innovative materials evoke a moment, in the late sixties, when "white cube" gallery space became the test chamber for a revolution in aesthetics. A section of documents, photos, and films movingly explores Hesse's short, hard, luminous life, begun in a family that barely escaped the Holocaust. Through Sept. 17. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, Thursdays, 11 to 9, and Fridays, 11 to 3. For the duration of the Hesse show, the museum will also be open on Saturdays, from 11 to 5:45, with no charge for admission.)

MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—The midtown oasis has reopened after almost three years of renovation and a Renzo Piano expansion. It marks the occasion with **"Masterworks from the Morgan,"** a selection of manuscripts, drawings, books, and seals from the collections. Manuscripts in the Brontë siblings' tiny handwriting, a libretto of "Aida" annotated by Verdi, and Picasso's pen-and-ink portrait of Marie-Thérèse Walter are among the items on display. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"John Lurie: Works on Paper."** Lurie's faux-Art Brut watercolors in saturated, acid hues function almost like single-panel cartoons, with captions added at the bottom. Their success naturally depends on one's appreciation of his comic sensibilities, which mirror the dry hipster absurdism of the filmmaker Jim Jarmusch (Lurie appeared in his early films "Stranger Than Paradise" and "Down by Law") or dissociative, language-poet-style texts. "I was a coyote. Then I died. Then I came back as a coyote" or "It's your turn to feed the bird" are exemplary. Others, however, veer into a kind of clueless offensiveness that doesn't ring funny, such as "Japan is for murderers" and "My assistant Jeremy is gay, now I paint like a fag," and makes viewers aware how little there is to these sketches when their texts are stripped away. Through Aug. 14. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Energy/Experimentation: Black Artists and Abstraction 1964-**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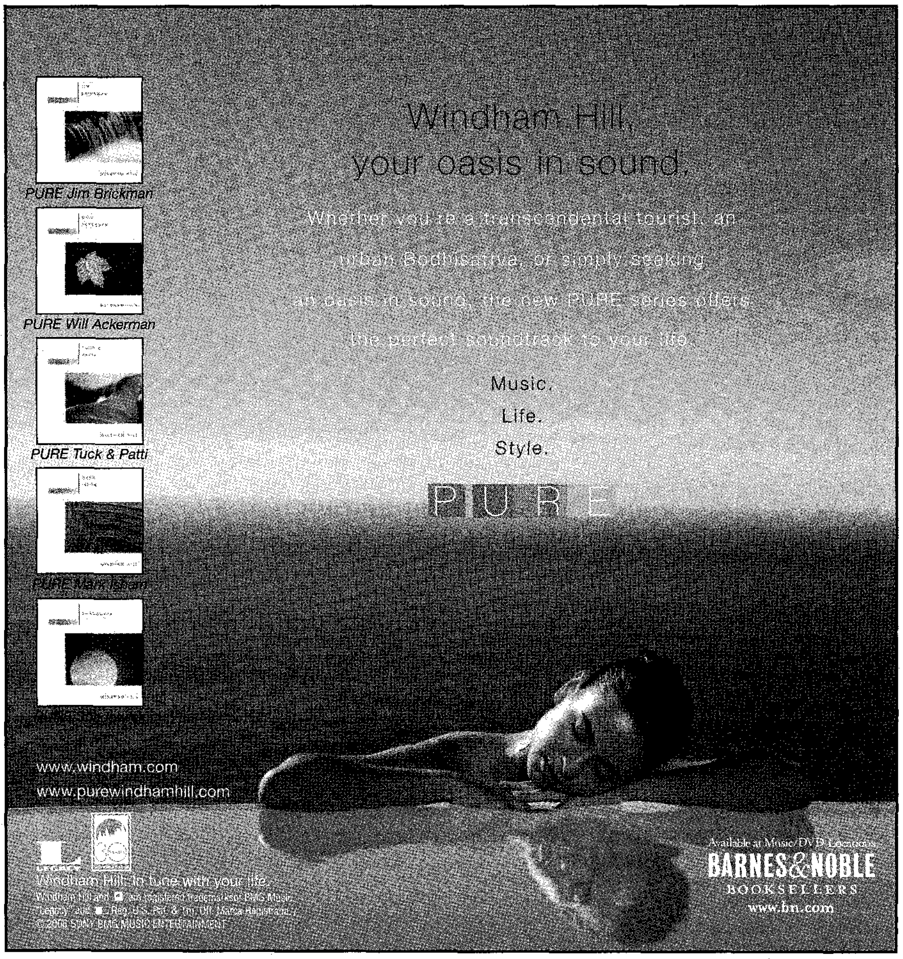
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1980" is a fragmentary sampling rather than a comprehensive survey, but it nonetheless demonstrates how varied sixties and seventies abstraction actually was. Among the artists are Sam Gilliam, Tom Lloyd, William T. Williams, and Howardena Pindell. Through July 2. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES–UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

JOEL MEYEROWITZ
What's not to like about a Joel Meyerowitz photograph? Only a curmudgeon would mistrust the pop appeal of his color pictures from the nineteen-seventies and eighties, the most famous of which still evoke vivid sense memories of summer days and nights on the Cape. This exhibition of vintage prints also includes shots of St. Louis, Fort Lauderdale, and New York (many of the latter with cameo appearances by the Empire State Building), but it's the images of laundry flapping in the breeze, the sun streaming into a polished hallway, and the baby-pink sky over a glowing Dairy Land that invite you to smell, taste, and feel vicarious pleasure. Through June 17. (Houk, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-750-7070.)

MAN RAY
Even if Man Ray's portraits of men are not his most inventive or influential photographic work, this roundup of nearly forty of them has the focus and punch of a compact museum show. It helps, of course, that the subjects—including Picasso, Hemingway, Cocteau, Dali, Giacometti, Satie, and Proust on his deathbed—are far from anonymous. Some of the images are so forbiddingly formal they could be parodies of stuffed-shirt portraiture, but others provide a glimpse of bohemian outrageousness: Duchamp vamping as Rrose Sélavy, the transvestite trapeze artist Barbette adjusting his hose, and the photographer himself in a starfish-studded turban—a madman magician. Through June 30. (Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 212-752-1223.)

"FREUD AND CONTEMPORARY ART: THE COLLECTION OF THE SIGMUND FREUD MUSEUM VIENNA"
Freud's well-known passion for antiquities makes the title ring with perverse opposition, although the works here are Freud-themed rather than Freud-sanctioned. Franz West offers a crooked iron couch, Clegg & Guttmann a photograph of a library shelf (bearing titles by Sigmund Freud, naturally). Joseph Kosuth's photo-and-text work blows up a page from "The Interpretation of Dreams." Haim Steinbach's simple "AHA!" wall text neatly conflates the moment of artistic/therapeutic epiphany. Creating an art collection celebrating Freud is itself an idea that begs to be analyzed (art and Freud as fetish), but it also highlights the historically sympathetic relationship between art and psychoanalysis. Through July 8. (Austrian Cultural Forum, 11 E. 52nd St. 212-319-5300.)

"PHOTO LIBRIS"
All the recent attention on the collectible photo book has created a market for titles formerly of interest only to specialists in the field. This timely exhibition showcases several rare examples along with a few more recent editions by the photographers William Klein, Gilles Peress, Eikoh Hosoe, Bruce Davidson, and others, each accompanied by a group of pictures from the book. The rarest: Carl Sandberg's "Steichen the Photographer," from 1929, signed by both author and artist, shown with three of Steichen's sublime still-lifes. The wildest: Bill Burke's "I Want to Take Picture," from 1987, an annotated scrapbook of a trip to Cambodia that ended with a traffic accident, a broken neck, and at least one terrific scratched negative of the Khmer Rouge. Through June 17. (Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010.)

Short List

JAMES LEE BYARS: Michael Werner, 4 E. 77th St. 212-988-1623; and Mary Boone, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-752-2929. Through June 24. **WILLEM DE KOONING:** L&M, 45 E. 78th St. 212-861-0020. Through June 3. **JUAN MUÑOZ:** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160. Through June 10. **ANTONI TÀPIES:** PaceWildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292. Through June 30.

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

MICHEL AUDER
Auder's single-channel video is slightly more sophisticated than his earlier outings, incorporating mutating screens and footage that's become less grainy as home-video technology has improved. His work still pivots around the pace of daily observation, at home and on the road, moving restlessly from one continent to another. The camera takes us into churches and shrines, along scarily narrow mountain roads, into a plane outfitted with multiple video monitors. It stops to watch a hummingbird feed, a parrot preen, a woman twirl her hair around her finger. There's no narrative or ostensible subject, but "The World Out of My Hands" creates a powerful aura, so that, back in the street, in the real world, you still feel yourself under its sway. Through June 17. (Newman Popiashvili, 504 W. 22nd St. 212-274-9166.)

JEAN DUBUFFET / JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT
Dubuffet died in 1985 at age eighty-three, Basquiat three years later at twenty-seven. A powerful show proves them contemporaries by more than chance. French taste at its wildest shakes hands with American wildness at its most canny. Primitivism—as cultivated oneness with growling and yakking instinct—is the word for it, a modern modus operandi that seethes in Dubuffet's late, crazy-quilt cityscapes and explodes in Basquiat's spiky scrawls. Who wins? If the test is unbuttoned energy, Basquiat in his two miracle years, 1981 and 1982. If pictorial resolution, Dubuffet. The agon illuminates—and improves—both. Through June 17. (PaceWildenstein, 534 W. 25th St. 212-929-7000.)

MUNRO GALLOWAY / FRANCIS CAPE
Though these two artists share thoughtfulness and a precise line, their travelogues hail from different philosophical planets. Galloway made a painting a day for a year while travelling from Brooklyn to the California Cascades—the oil-on-paper panels are hung in a grid and feel like a calendar of dreams. Cape's color photographs are mounted in rustic wooden frames and hung above a yellow-painted wainscot, evidence of the artist's ongoing preoccupation with a sort of post-structuralist cabinetry. The pictures themselves were shot last November, on a two-and-a-half-hour walk through the neighborhoods of Gentilly and St. Roch in New Orleans. Each shows a once comfortable bungalow, now vacant and uniquely wrecked by hurricane and flood; it takes a while to realize that, in each picture, a uniform line of mold, stain, or dust registers the high-water mark. Through June 17 and July 28, respectively. (Murray Guy, 453 W. 17th St. 212-463-7372.)

JENNY HOLZER
It's a fitting moment for a resurgence of eighties-style political art, with its screaming textual screeds, critiques, and exposés of official institutions. Holzer, a veteran of the culture wars, complies with a predictable post-9/11 exegesis on Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantánamo Bay, delivered via declassified government documents blown up and printed on canvas. The documents, which have entered the public record via the Freedom of Information Act, are filled with blocks and blots of ink that register, in the art realm, not only as censored information but also as unavoidable nods to formalist grids and minimalist geometry. At Lambert, large-scale photographs doc-

DVD NOTES
TEEN SPIRIT

François Truffaut put the French New Wave on the map in 1959 with **"The 400 Blows,"** his famously autobiographical account of his youth in an indifferent family, harsh schools, and a reformatory. But as a new DVD release of the film, from Criterion, makes clear, its success is due as much to what Truffaut left out as to what he put in.

Filming on location in Paris, Truffaut relates the painful, anarchic misadventures that begin with the classroom punishment of young Antoine Doinel (played by the fierce yet hypersensitive Jean-Pierre Léaud) for something he didn't do. Faced with suspension, Antoine spends the next day playing hooky at the movies with his best friend, René (Patrick Auffay), and a spiral of lies and their consequences cause him to run away from home. When Antoine is caught stealing a typewriter from his father's office, he is turned over to the police by his father and booked like a common criminal. Truffaut, born in 1932, based his script on events of his own youth in the nineteen-forties. But, according to the DVD commentary by Truffaut's childhood friend Robert Lachenay (on whom René is based), Truffaut emptied the story of its crucial motive—his intellectual precocity, centered around the cinema. Lachenay says that they didn't go to the movies for fun: "The cinema was our work." As early as 1945, Truffaut and Lachenay spent all day at the movies, not just watching but studying—counting shots, making dossiers on directors, and filling them out with stills that they stole late at night from movie theatres. When Truffaut took a typewriter from his father's office, in 1948, it was not to finance a vagabond life but to fund his film society, the Cinemaniac's Circle. In short, Truffaut refined his story for general audiences by suppressing the facts of his own intellectual fanaticism.

"Napoleon Dynamite," the buoyant, hip-to-be-square teen comedy that was a long-running hit in 2004 (now reissued by Fox as a two-disk set with fun extras), was directed and co-written by Jared Hess when he was just twenty-four years old. Hess's precociously precise camera style and impish eye for the infinitesimal incident are a perfect match for the cantankerous, geeky title character (played by Jon Heder) and his innocent quest for friendship and serenity despite an oddball family and dismissive, brutal, or just plain popular peers in a high school in Preston, Idaho. As Hess explains in his commentary, his film, too, is autobiographical: most of the scenes are drawn from his own youth in Preston, the high school is his own, and the characters are based on (and even played by) his family, friends, and neighbors. Yet, like Truffaut, Hess leaves out the cultural context: his family is Mormon, and Preston itself was founded as a Mormon settlement and is predominantly Mormon today.

—*Richard Brody*

ument Holzer's earlier text projections on buildings, including Rockefeller Plaza and the Forty-second Street library, which seem more artfully engaged than the current, overdetermined works. Through June 17. (Lambert, 564 W. 25th St. 212-242-3611; and Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727.)

JEFF MERMELSTEIN
From Helen Levitt to Garry Winogrand to Philip-Lorca diCorcia, the tradition of New York street photography has attracted the medium's best and brightest. It takes nerve to join their ranks these days, and Mermelstein has plenty of it. Working in color, he's made some of the slyest, funniest street pictures of the past twenty-five years, many of which are here: a woman with a ten-dollar bill clamped between her teeth, a feisty Chihuahua perched atop a stack of newspapers like the king of the jungle, a scorched and smoking work shoe in the middle of a sidewalk. The nine powerful pictures taken on September 11, 2001, prove that Mermelstein is a lot more than witty. Through June 10. (Kasher, 521 W. 23rd St. 212-966-3978.)

RICHARD SERRA
Serra's recent efforts are considerably more earthbound than the spirals and arcs that soared through previous decades and into public controversy. Weight, rather than lightness, is his professed interest here. One sculpture, called "Round," is a big, eye-level plug of steel. Other works turn slabs of oxidizing metal on their sides to create simple compositions—in one case, lining the walls like wainscoting. "Equal Weights and Measures" arranges six boxes to create, when one steps back, a three-dimensional line graph. Even the titles ape the faux-scientific rigidity and precision of sixties minimalism—a shame, since these are the orthodoxies Serra originally set out to destroy. Here he re-creates Donald Judd (though with a rust patina) rather than forging past him. Through Aug. 11. (Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111.)

"AN ONGOING LOW-GRADE MYSTERY"
Every scrap of work in this show, organized by the connoisseur-at-large Bob Nickas, is red or red with white accents. It's even mostly the same shade of orange-tilting basic lipstick red. The monochrome becomes self-neutralizing, foregrounding instead a subtheme of hard-edged abstraction, tweaked by passages of scatological or cartoony misalignment. This is Nickas's third go at red-all-over, the first having occurred twenty years ago in the then-hot East Village, so the project reads as an opinionated tour through recent art history. Among those included this time are Sherrie Levine, Yayoi Kusama, William Eggleston, Steven Parrino, Wolfgang Tillmans, Trisha Donnelly, and Ann Pibal. Through June 24. (Cooper, 521 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105.)

Short List

JAMES LEE BYARS: Rubenstein, 527 W. 23rd St., 526 W. 24th St., and 534 W. 24th St. 212-627-8000; and Mary Boone, 541 W. 24th St. 212-752-2929. Through June 24. **THOMAS HELBIG:** Bortolami Dayan, 510 W. 25th St. 212-727-2050. Through June 17. **PAUL ETIENNE LINCOLN:** Burgin, 243 W. 18th St. 212-462-2668. Through June 23. **LORETTA LUX:** Milo, 525 W. 25th St. 212-414-0370. Through June 24. **JOSIAH MCELHENY:** Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 212-627-6000. Through June 3. **MICHAEL PERRONE:** Steinberg, 526 W. 26th St. 212-924-5770. Through June 24. **HIRAKI SAWA:** James Cohan, 533 W. 26th St. 212-714-9500. Through June 3. **MARTIN SCHOELLER:** Hasted Hunt, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-0006. Through Sept. 4.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
With five "Diamond Project" premières behind it, the company takes a breath to perform repertory works like Balanchine's tongue-in-cheek "Donizetti Variations" and his Bach masterpiece "Concerto Barocco," Robbins's "The Cage," and the recently unveiled Jean-Pierre Bonnefoux ballet, "Two Birds with the Wings of One." A less performed work also resurfaces on Thursday: "In Memory of . . . ," an elegiac essay on mortality, set to Alban Berg's 1935 Violin Concerto, which Robbins made for Bal-

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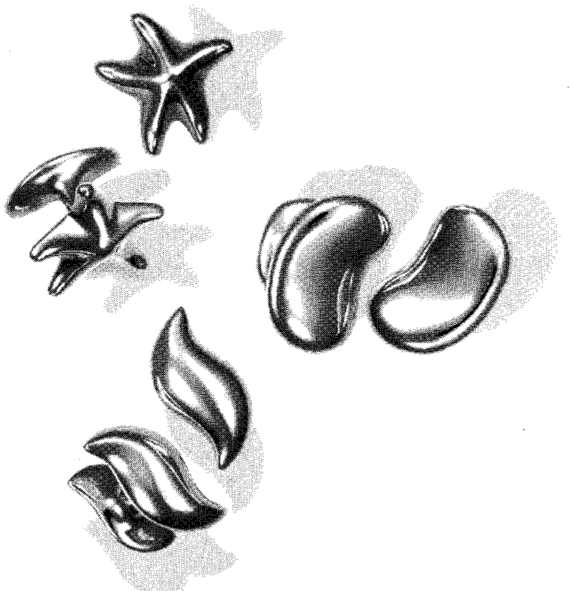

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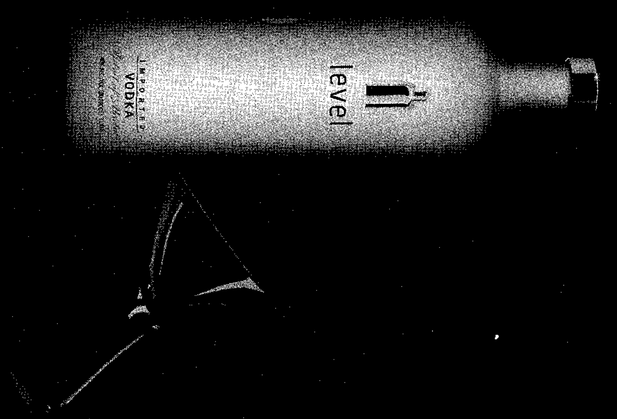

level

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
CROWN ROYAL

Last year, the Atlanta rapper T.I. and the Houston rapper Lil' Flip could not come to an agreement on who was "King of the South," a title they grappled for entertainingly on mix tapes. The idea of crowning only one of the South's many great MCs is confusing, though it's very hip-hop to anoint yourself king of something in a (hopefully) bloodless coup. Further confusing this struggle is the fact that T.I.'s coronation is no longer such a hyperbolic idea. Well-liked by his peers, T.I. is a terrifyingly fluid rapper and a small, fine-featured man who exudes unhurried confidence and charisma. He is currently exuding in the film "ATL" and on his new hit album, "King," where he must navigate around both his foes and a wonderful series of bouncy, syncopated beats, the best of which, "Get It," is provided by the veteran New York producer Swizz Beatz. T.I. is convinced of his own excellence but manages to avoid the pitfalls of his peers: paranoia, rage, general ickiness. His forte is grace, whether he was born to it or learned it by trial.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

anchine's last muse, Suzanne Farrell, in 1985, two years after the death of Balanchine, his friend and mentor. In the three-character ballet, Wendy Whelan will perform the part of a young woman who dances with her lover but is slowly drawn away by a figure of death. Casts appear on the company's Web site a week in advance. ♦ May 31 at 7:30: "Donizetti Variations," "Two Birds with the Wings of One," and "Symphony in C." ♦ June 1 at 8: "Fearful Symmetries," "In Memory of . . . ," and "Firebird." ♦ June 2 at 8: "Donizetti Variations," "Two Birds with the Wings of One," and "An American in Paris." ♦ June 3 at 2: "Donizetti Variations," "The Cage," "Andantino," and "Firebird." ♦ June 3 at 8 (an all-Balanchine program): "Concerto Barocco," "Episodes," and "Symphony in C." ♦ June 4 at 3: "An American in Paris," "Fancy Free," and "N.Y. Export: Opus Jazz." ♦ June 6 at 7:30: "Divertimento No. 15," "In Memory Of . . . ," and "N.Y. Export: Opus Jazz." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Through June 25.)

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
In James Kudelka's version of "Cinderella" (made for National Ballet of Canada in 2004), which will have its A.B.T. première on Friday, Cinderella is not a victimized waif, as she is usually depicted, but a mopey, nature-loving tomboy. Her metamorphosis into a sylph is a gradual, bumpy process. The prince, too, is transformed, by his love for her, from a distant, solitary monarch-in-waiting. The sisters are danced by women (usually, they are men in drag), the henpecked father is gone, and Cinderella's alcoholic stepmother rules the roost. But these are still comic characters, with silly costumes and clunky, off-kilter pointe work showing up their deficiencies. The story has been moved to the early twentieth century, with elaborate sets and costumes (by David Boechler) inspired by the Russian Art Deco fashion designer Erté. But one thing remains unchanged, and that is Prokofiev's brilliant, quicksilver score. Casts are listed on the company's Web site. ♦ May 31 at 2: "Apollo," "Jeu de Cartes" (with Julio Bocca), and "Petrouchka." ♦ May 31 at 8: "Apollo," "Jeu de Cartes," and "Petrouchka" (with Herman Cornejo). ♦ June 1 at 8: "Apollo" (with David Hallberg), "Jeu de Cartes," and "Petrouchka" (with Cornejo). ♦ June 2 at 8: "Cinderella" (with Julie Kent and Marcelo Gomes). ♦ June 3 at 2: "Cinderella" (with Gillian Murphy and Hallberg). ♦ June 3 at 8: "Cinderella" (with Kent and Gomes). (Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center. 212-362-6000. Through July 15.)

MANDANCE PROJECT
To the walls, staircases, hanging ropes, and hand-held flashlights that Eliot Feld has used recently to goad his creativity he now adds a trampoline, tin cans, and more ropes. "Op. Boing," one of three premières, is the trampoline number, and it takes a supine Chris Vo from slowly swelling bounces into jackknife jumps and back. "Sacred Steel" sends Wu-Kang Chen rolling on the floor to blues rock, then wraps him up in a flashing rope light for a testimonial climax. "Pursuing Odette," set to high-Romantic Mahler, reëxamines the "Swan Lake" heroine (Ha-Chi Yu on one pointe shoe, the ultimate dance prop), searching for a way of extending tradition without violating it, or her. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. May 31-June 3 and June 6 at 8 and June 4 at 7:30. Through June 11.)

"CLEVER HANS"
Lynn Brown and Lynn Marie Ruse set their dance-theatre version of the Grimm brothers' fairy tale in an industrial purgatory: there are plastic tubes, metal, rocks, garbage cans, and a giant green doll house. The vexing story (supplied verbatim by the narrator) follows the simpleton Hans on a journey marred by increasingly ghastly mistakes. A trio of performers illustrates the tale with a blend of vaudevillian physical comedy, modern dance, and spoken word while the Soldier String Trio plays its original harpsichord variations and Gypsy carnival tunes live. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-868-4444. May 31-June 2 and June 4 at 8:30 and June 3 at 4 and 8:30.)

"4-ISH"
At the ISH Institute in Amsterdam, Marco Gerris and his band of intrepid hipsters make club and street-inflected dances that mix old school and new school: skateboarding with hip-hop, roller disco with multimedia. In their latest concoction, "4-ISH," a live d.j. and a beat-boxer are the ringmasters of a high-adrenaline circus. Cocky half-pipe skateboarders and break-dancers execute their gravity-defying stunts while the cool digital effects flicker on giant video displays. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. June 2 at 7, June 3 at 2 and 7, and June 4 at noon and 5. Through June 18.)

CHRISTOPHER CAINES DANCE COMPANY
"Worklight," an evening-long suite of dances, is as theatrically bare-bones as the title suggests: plainly attired dancers gathered in one of City Center's rehearsal studios, where the space for dancing is ample, but the seating isn't. The extravagance lies in the live music—preludes by Bach, a double canon by Thomas Tallis, a double fugue for voices by Glenn Gould, and works for speaking choir by Ernst Toch (some of which haven't been performed since the nineteen-thirties). For the musically erudite Caines, these works are intricately related, and they draw from him responses that are, for all of their matching intricacy, full of wit and breath. (Studio 4, 130 W. 56th St. 718-554-1948. June 2-4 and June 6 at 8. Through June 8.)

ALLYSON GREEN DANCE
Born in El Paso, Green danced in New York from 1987 to 2001 and is now based in San Diego. She returns to Danspace Project for "Migrations," a fifteenth-anniversary season of new works in a summary, this-is-your-life mode. Tijuana's Lux Boreal Danza Contemporánea and Green's frequent collaborator Carolyn Hall perform her border meditation, "Nada Que Declarar (But Everything to Say)," which juxtaposes Bach's Solo Cello Suite No. 6 (played live by Felix Fan) with Tijuana street sounds. And for "Full Circle," in which Green's band of women takes on Beethoven's String Quartet in F Major, Op. 18, No. 1 (also played live), a dozen colleagues from her New York days—including Heidi Latsky, Karen Graham, and Monica Bill Barnes—give the title a personal meaning. (St. Marks In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. June 2-4 at 8:30.)

DANCEMOPOLITAN
The Nicoles (Nicole Wolcott and Nicole Berger) threaten to overwhelm the tiny stage at Joe's Pub as they host "Thrash and Rock," a dance-cabaret evening ripe with the excesses of hard rock. The mostly female guest list—which includes the intense Ellis Wood, the Cirque du Soleil alum Sara Joel, and the former Mark Morris dancer Megan Williams—performs to tunes by Led Zeppelin, Janis Joplin, and David Bowie. (Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200. June 2-3 at 9:30.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

AUSTRIAN CULTURAL FORUM
A coterie of singers that includes the soprano Ilana Davidson and the tenor Richard Clement will somehow crowd onto the Forum's chic but tiny stage to perform Ernst Krenek's chamber opera "What Price Confidence?," along with a selection of Krenek songs. (11 E. 52nd St. May 31 and June 2 at 8. For free tickets, which are required, call 212-319-5300.)

SUMI JO
The coloratura soprano, noted for her agility in scaling the heights and leaps of the bel-canto repertory, celebrates the twentieth anniversary of her operatic début with a concert of arias by Vivaldi, Donizetti, Gounod, Offenbach, and Thomas; Will Crutchfield, her dedicated Caramoor colleague, conducts the Orchestra of St. Luke's. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. June 2 at 8.)

MIDAMERICA PRODUCTIONS:
"MÉDÉE"
Cherubini's vivid treatment of the ancient Medea myth—once a great vehicle for Maria Callas—is offered in concert by Peter Tiboris's Manhattan Philharmonic (and the Russian Chamber Chorus of New York), with another Greek soprano, Irini Tsirakidou, in the title role. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. June 3 at 7:30.)

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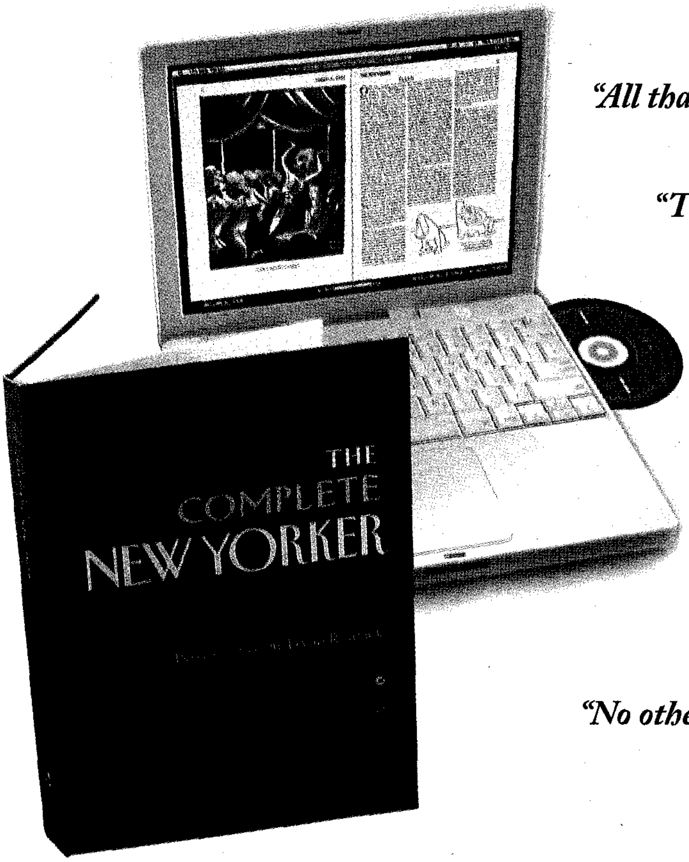

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ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
May 31 at 6:45: As a prelude to the Philharmonic's final concerts of the season, the avuncular Peter Schickele offers some insights into Berlioz's "Symphonie Fantastique," followed by a performance of the work under Lorin Maazel. ♦ June 1 at 7:30 and June 3 at 8: Maazel ends his season not only with Berlioz's blockbuster but also with more challenging works by Stravinsky (the Concerto for Piano and Winds, from the composer's Parisian period) and Elliott Carter ("Dialogues"), both featuring the pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard, a sophisticated interpreter with an incisive touch and a shimmering sound. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

MUSICA SACRA
The nineteenth century saw revolutions both musical and political, but choral music continued its traditional conversation between the sacred and secular realms. Music by Bruckner, Mendelssohn, and Brahms, giants of both genres, is featured on Richard Westenburg's latest program with his superb professional chorus. (Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, Madison Ave. at 73rd St. 212-868-4444. June 5 at 7.)

RECITALS

BEN HOADLEY
The Hartford Symphony's former principal bassoonist (joined by the pianist Blair McMillen and the cellist Clarice Jensen) offers an unusually expansive recital of works for his oft-neglected instrument, including works by Cherubini (an aria from "Médée," with the Met mezzo-soprano Vanessa Cariddi), Villa-Lobos, and two young composers. (Rose Rehearsal Studio, Lincoln Center. May 31 at 7:30. No tickets required.)

BARGEMUSIC
June 1-2 at 7:30: Schubert provides the theme this weekend, with Dmitry Rachmanov offering two separate programs of the composer's solo-piano music—each featuring a brace of sonatas and beginning with the "Moments Musicaux." ♦ June 3 at 7:30 and June 4 at 4: Two experienced Schubert hands, the violinist Mark Peskanov and the cellist Colin Carr, join Rachmanov in two duo works (including the "Arpeggione" Sonata) and in the Piano Trio No. 1 in B-Flat Major. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

CHRISTOPHER CREVISTON
Any saxophonist who wants to have a solo classical career still has to keep one foot in the jazz world, which this virtuoso does with aplomb. He teams up with some friends (including the pianist Yvonne Troxler) for new and recent works by Whitney Ashe and John Anthony Lennon along with Johnny Green's "Body and Soul" and Bruch's "Kol Nidrei." (Greenwich House, 46 Barrow St. June 1 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

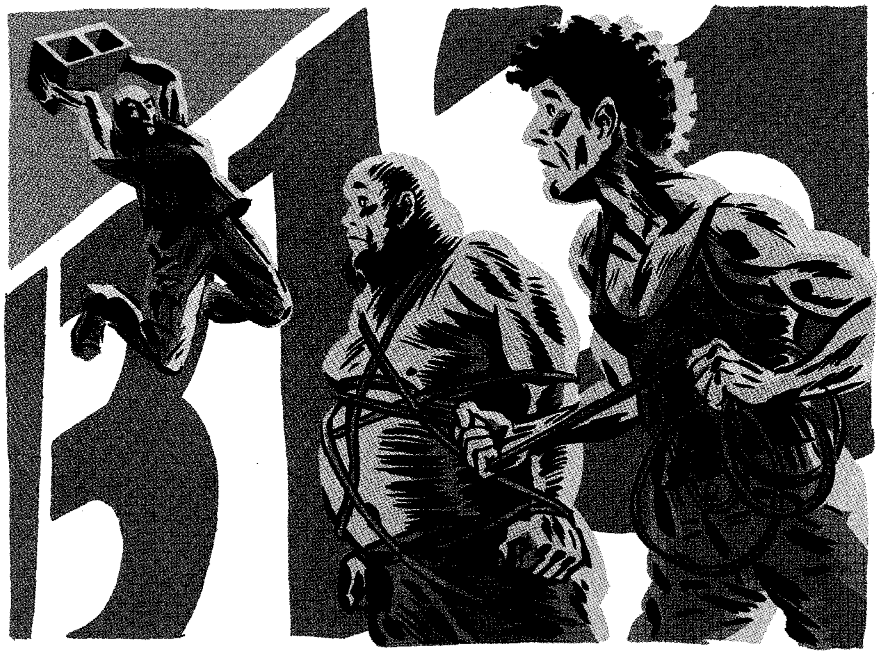
ETHOS PERCUSSION GROUP
The Lark Quartet joins the noted ensemble for premières of music by the Australian composer Andrew Byrne and the Cuban-born jazz percussionist Dafnis Prieto before going it alone in Bartók's String Quartet No. 1. (Scandinavia House, Park Ave. at 38th St. 212-304-0122. June 2 at 8.)

ST. LUKE'S CHAMBER ENSEMBLE: "SECOND HELPINGS"
The informal contemporary-music series (which features such performers as the pianist Margaret Kampmeier and the cellist Myron Lutzke) offers new and recent works by Joan Panetti, Michael Daugherty, Barbara White, and Gabriela Lena Frank. (Chelsea Art Museum, Eleventh Ave. at 22nd St. 212-594-6100. June 3 at 2.)

MUSIC AT THE MORRIS-JUMEL MANSION
A clutch of the little mansion's resident performers (including the harpsichordist Rebecca Pechefsky) perform works by Bach and Telemann for flute, cello, harpsichord, and recorder in the octagonal drawing room of Manhattan's oldest house. (65 Jumel Terrace. 212-923-8008. June 3 at 3.)

FIREWORKS
In a concert with the Now Ensemble, the rock-influenced new-music group offers premières of works by Robert Carl ("Written on Wood"), John Mayrose, and Marco Oppedisano. (Tenri Cultural Institute, 43A W. 13th St. June 3 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

BANG ON A CAN MARATHON
The ever-expanding, eleven-hour downtown jamboree—now free—features so much dizzying variety (Anthony Braxton's hundred-tuba orchestra, a Tuvan throat-singing punk band, and Milan's Sentieri Selvaggi ensemble, to name a few) that its creators, the composers Michael Gordon, Julia Wolfe, and David Lang, almost recede into the background. But the Bang on a Can All-Stars will indeed be on hand, playing a new piece by Michael Nyman. (World Financial Center Winter Garden, 220 Vesey St. June 4 at 11:30 A.M. No tickets required.)



"District B13," a thriller featuring the wall-scaling sport "parkour," opens June 2.

ERIK T. JOHNSON

THE WESTERN WIND
The music of Salamone Rossi (ca. 1570-1630) transcends not only the border between the Renaissance and the early Baroque but the period's social divides as well (he flourished at the court of Mantua but had to return to the ghetto every night). The versatile chamber choir offers a program of his attractive Italian madrigals and Hebrew Psalms. (Church of St. Luke in the Fields, 487 Hudson St. 212-414-9419. June 4 at 3.)

SEQUITUR: "CONCERTOS TWO"
Concertos are a good fit for this invigorating new-music ensemble, which puts works by eminently respectable composers (including, in this concert, Steven Burke and Jorge Liderman) into an always unpredictable context. The soloists for this slate of world and New York premières include the bass clarinettist Michael Lowenstern and the oboist Jacqueline Leclair. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. June 5 at 8.)

DA CAPO CHAMBER PLAYERS: "EARS TO THE EAST"
The distinguished new-music ensemble, long an intimate part of the New York scene, examines Asian musical traditions as heard in works by Chinary Ung, Huang Ruo, Evan Ziporyn ("Tsmindao Ghmerto"), and Shirish Korde ("Bandit Queen," a world-première one-act opera featuring the mezzo-soprano Alexandra Montano). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. June 6 at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

HUDSON VALLEY CHAMBER MUSIC CIRCLE
The annual spring series, an interlude between the bustle of the regular season and the summer months, begins a three-concert schedule with a program by the flutist Eugenia Zukerman and her daughter, the soprano Arianna Zukerman, who (with the pianist Rachelle Jonck) offer solo works and duets by Bach, Bartók, Fauré, and Del Tredici. (Olin Hall, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 518-537-6665. June 3 at 8.)

"BARTÓK AND BEYOND"
This overstuffed concert, a pendant to a musicological conference on Bartók and the influence of folk music, has the true Leon Botstein touch. Such gifted musicians as the pianist Blair McMillen, the Daedalus Quartet, and the folksinger Beáta Palya perform a program that surrounds music by Bartók (including the Sonata for Piano) with works by Roberto Sierra and Bright Sheng. (Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7900. June 3 at 8.)

MOVIES OPENING

THE BREAK-UP
A comedy, directed by Peyton Reed, about a couple (Jennifer Aniston and Vince Vaughn) who break up but continue to share an apartment. Opening June 2. (In wide release.)

COASTLINES
Victor Nunez directed this drama, about an ex-con who falls in love with a sheriff's wife. Opening May 31. (IFC Center.)

THE CULT OF THE SUICIDE BOMBER
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening June 2. (Cinema Village.)

DISTRICT B13
A futuristic action film, directed by Pierre Morel, about a policeman who seeks to recapture a neutron bomb from a criminal gang. In French. Opening June 2. (In wide release.)

THE OMEN
In this remake of the 1976 horror film, a man learns that his son is the Devil in the flesh. Starring Liev Schreiber and Julia Stiles; directed by John Moore. Opening June 6. (In wide release.)

LA TROPICAL
A documentary by David Turnley, about Cuban music. Opening June 2. (Village East Cinemas.)

THE WAR TAPES
Three American soldiers filmed what they saw in Iraq; their material is edited by Deborah Scranton. Opening June 2. (Sunshine Cinema.)

NOW PLAYING

AKEELAH AND THE BEE
Doug Atchison's heartfelt drama is centered on Akeelah (the wonderful Keke Palmer), an eleven-year-old who goes from hiding her talent for spelling at her South L.A. middle school all the way to the national spelling bee. Atchison succeeds not only in establishing a genuine sense of place (with the help of funny, unfettered supporting actors, including J. R. Villarreal as Akeelah's wealthy, down-to-earth friend) but also in offering a believable tale of hope. Laurence Fishburne, as Akeelah's spelling trainer, turns in an admirably restrained performance, and Palmer exudes poise beyond her years as an emotionally complicated, intelligent girl who must learn to pick her battles, and to fight to win.—*Shauna Lyon* (In wide release.)

CERTAINES NOUVELLES
This intimate historical melodrama, from 1979, captures the anguish of a specific place and time—Algeria in the summer of 1961, the year before its hard-won independence from France. In a coastal village, two families of French colonists try to go on living their modest and tranquil lives against a rising tide of terrorist attacks, both from Algerian militants and from right-wing French hard-liners. Ordinary things have lost their normalcy, as roads are blocked by checkpoints, bombs shatter storefronts and destroy hotels, gunmen murder political opponents with impunity, and unfamiliar passersby are instantly suspect, yet the families work and play and love with artificial gaiety and passive resignation, as the radio, which is virtually a character in this drama, provides a steady drumbeat of news of the ever-approaching chaos. The director, Jacques Davila, who was born in Oran and lived through that fateful summer on the Algerian coast, embodies his rush of memories and mixed emotions in plangent, restrained images and conveys the overwhelming visual allure of the seaside cliffs and the numbing languor of life as an endless summer that held the unwelcome French in fateful thrall. In French.—*Richard Brody* (Museum of Modern Art; June 1 and June 3.)

CRIME OF PASSION
Kathy Ferguson (Barbara Stanwyck), a hard-nosed and street-smart journalist in San Francisco—and a proudly single woman on the brink of middle age—is taken off the gossip desk to cover a murder investigation by two cops who have come up from L.A. She falls in love with one of them, and when her scoop lands her a big New York promotion she skips it and marries him on a whim. Lieutenant Bill Doyle (Sterling Hayden) is a big, sardonic doormat of a team player whose burden is lightened by life with Kathy, but she wants more for him, and her idle-hands plot for advancement involves Doyle's boss, Inspector Tony Pope (Raymond Burr). With this tight-lipped film noir of workplace infighting and doomed romance, the director, Gerd Oswald, gets all the little things right, from the frowzy styles and smeary makeup to the inspired casting (including Fay Wray as Pope's wife) and the terse visual wit of his gunshots and kisses. Released in 1957.—*R.B.* (Film Forum; May 31.)

THE DA VINCI CODE
Ron Howard's film of Dan Brown's novel is faithful to both the spirit and the letter of the original. Such loyalty will be balm to the souls of his forty million readers, who have come to accept the book as holy writ. Others will greet the news as they would an outbreak of the plague. The movie stars Tom Hanks as Robert Langdon, an American professor who, partnered with a young French cryptographer (Audrey Tautou), untangles a knot of clues. These begin with a corpse in the Louvre, continue in a country house owned by a conspiracy expert (Ian McKellen), lead to London for a touch of local color, and end in a Scottish church, where the true descendant of Jesus is revealed, to regrettable sounds of mirth in the audience. Our heroes' opponents include a devilish bishop (Alfred Molina) and a murderous monk (Paul Bettany). It should have been possible to mold the nonsense of the novel into brightly colored hokum; instead, Howard, in collusion with his screenwriter, Akiva Goldsman, has chosen to serve up two and a half hours of verbose and joyless gloom. If you can't face watching this movie, you could always pray for it.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 5/29/06.) (In wide release.)

LONG KNIVES NIGHT
An animal was definitely harmed in the making of this film—as were lots of people. Victor Dashuk, a veteran director from Belarus, begins his sharp 1999 documentary broadside against the repressive regime of his country's President, Alexander Lukashenko, with footage of local Satanists crucifying and sacrificing a dog. Cutting to a wax museum of Soviet leaders from Lenin and Stalin to Brezhnev and even Gorbachev and Yeltsin, Dashuk declares that the Slavic people, in their fealty to such leaders, have been practicing their own kind of devil worship. With his videotaped scenes of impassive security forces preventing a demonstration, streetside closeups of anti-Lukashenko protesters being beaten bloody by masked riot police, news clips of the toadies chosen to serve as Lukashenko's rubber-stamp parliament, and footage of the actual elected legislators locked out of their offices by the President's own guards, Dashuk makes his point: Belarus is not so much misgoverned from above as from within and is divided between those who are ready to fight for the rule of law and those who derive psychic or material comfort from their enslavement. In Russian and Belarusian.—*R.B.* (Pioneer Theatre; June 1-6.)

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE III
Tom Cruise returns as Ethan Hunt, the superfit secret operative who needs a team of fellow-agents to help him retrieve his missing sense of humor. They must also track down Agent Lindsey Farris (Keri Russell) in Berlin. She has been captured by Owen Davian (Philip Seymour Hoffman), who represents an even greater threat to world stability than Truman Capote. This third installment of the franchise, directed by J. J. Abrams, is the most streamlined to date, with a succession of gargantuan set pieces (the best of them in the Vatican) and dogged attempts to perforate the eardrums of the audience. Little of it makes sense, and the treachery of insiders—a source of worry to Hunt's superiors, played by Laurence Fishburne and Billy Crudup—has become the most wearisome feature of the genre. Toward the end, Abrams seems to run out of juice, and the role of Hunt's new wife (Michelle Monaghan) feels insultingly plaintive and thin. A tip for the next sequel: the closer these movies get to the old TV series, with its indefatigable teamwork, the more gripping they become. The mission was never meant to be a one-man show.—*A.L.* (5/15/06) (In wide release.)

OVER THE HEDGE
The Dreamworks animation unit ups the creative ante with this comedy about a group of hibernating forest creatures who awaken to find that civilization has settled into their own back yard. When the cute-as-a-button animals begin foraging for food in the garbage of the new housing development, the increasingly unhappy residents take exterminator action. Based on comic-strip characters created by Michael Fry and T. Lewis, and directed by Tim Johnson and Karey Kirkpatrick, the story has a loony, slapstick verve, and the star-studded voice work is uniformly entertaining. Especially good are Wanda Sykes as Stella the Skunk, Nick Nolte as Vincent the Bear, and Thomas Haden Church as the furry creatures' arch-nemesis, known as the Verminator.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

POSEIDON
In his remake of the campy "Poseidon Adventure," the director Wolfgang Petersen, back in the water again, gets down to business quickly: a giant cruise liner gets hit by a rogue wave and turns turtle. The ship's poker-table hustler (Josh Lucas), who mysteriously possesses the precise skills required to lead peo-

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ple through upside-down ocean liners, takes command of a few would-be survivors. What follows is an exciting exercise in fear and hydraulics. No doubt about it: Petersen has a dynamic feel for the rush and heave of water, the pent-up energy, the sheer heft and uncontrollable momentum of the stuff. Mashed, whomped in the face with exploding hatches, bloodied, burned, forcibly gargled again and again, the actors give a good impression of going through hell, and they look genuinely worse for the wear.—*David Denby* (5/22/06) (In wide release.)

THE PROPOSITION

John Hillcoat's sweat-stained movie is set in the Australian outback at the tail end of the nineteenth century. Here, outside a remote settlement, live Captain Morris Stanley (Ray Winstone), the chief of police, and his wife, Martha (Emily Watson), who are striving to maintain a British decorum, complete with Christmas dinner, in an untamable land. Hence the determination with which Stanley pursues the Burns gang—three brothers (Richard Wilson, Guy Pearce, and Danny Huston) who have murdered a local family. The title refers to Stanley's risky offer: if the middle brother can find and kill the eldest and most savage, the youngest will be spared. What ensues is a strange blend of manhunt and tone poem, in which even the most brutal characters seem rapt in the face of red earth and endless sky. The film was written by Nick Cave, who, not surprisingly, supplied the music; the result may feel confused as a narrative, but, as a portrait of a riven culture, bred on racial conflict, it is formidably hard to ignore.—*A.L.* (5/8/06) (Angelika Film Center and Empire 25.)

RUSSIAN DOLLS

Romain Duris plays Xavier, a thirtyish cipher, who, along with Wendy (Kelly Reilly), was among the seven characters in "L'Auberge Espagnole" (2002), a friendly, lightweight comedy about a group of young people from all over Europe spending a year together as roommates in a Barcelona flat. At the end of the movie, Xavier goes back to Paris, where, a few years later, his life has become a pointless mess. A hack journalist and screenwriter, he doesn't seem to know what he wants to write, or who he is, or which woman he wants to make love to. He teams up with Wendy in London on a screenplay but can't give up a beautiful model with pouty lips (Lucy Gordon). The movie offers touristic views of Paris and St. Petersburg and many pretty faces and bodies; it's pleasant and fast-moving, but you may want to brain the slightly vacuous hero for not recognizing that the extraordinary woman right in front of him is the only woman in the world. Written and directed by Cédric Klapisch. In English, Russian, French, Spanish, and Italian.—*D.D.* (5/22/06) (IFC Center.)

THIEVES' HIGHWAY

Jules Dassin's pulsating 1949 trucker movie about a Second World War veteran (Richard Conte) who challenges the corruption of San Francisco's produce marketplace has an elemental force different from the intricate pulp poetry of the director's London-set "Night and the City" (1950) and Paris-set "Rififi" (1954). The Italian actress Valentina Cortesa was an out-of-left-field choice to play the waterfront whore who becomes the hero's ally, but she's phenomenal in the role—playful, turbulent, and sensual, and blazingly honest when it counts. Hired by the crooked fruit-and-vegetable dealer Lee J. Cobb to distract Conte, she instead falls in love with him and awakens him to the stirrings of his authentic self. Conte, with his wounded eyes, and Cortesa, with her fervid ones, make a combustible team. They explode the parameters of social melodrama and film noir and turn this exposé into a steamy existential romance.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; June 2-3.)

UNITED 93

Paul Greengrass's account of how a single group of passengers, almost certain of death, decided on the morning of September 11, 2001, to fight back against hijackers on a suicide mission turns out to be—after much public anxiety about potential "exploitation"—an example of one-hundred-per-cent professional filmmaking. Greengrass's movie is tightly wrapped, unrelenting, and, no matter how exciting, superbly precise. For this story of semi-anonymous group heroism, he uses actual professionals (pilots, flight attendants, an air-traffic controller) mixed in with largely unknown actors, and avoids visual or verbal rhetoric. The handheld camera is an active participant in everything that's going on—and still manages to see what it needs to see out of the corner of its eye. The avoidance of front-and-center staging makes us feel the uncertainty of an unprecedented situation. This is true existential filmmaking; in the end, the viewer's dread is released in mad exhilaration as the passengers charge the hijackers with the force of engorged water breaking through a dam.—*D.D.* (5/1/06) (In wide release.)

X-MEN: THE LAST STAND

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

Also Playing

AN AMERICAN HAUNTING: In wide release. **AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH:** In wide release. **STICK IT:** In wide release. **THE WILD:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"New Filmmakers." May 31 at 8: "Public Domain" (2003, Kris Lefcoe). ♦ Special screenings. May 31 and June 1 at 7 and 9: "Blast of Silence" (1961, Allen Baron). ♦ June 1 at 8: "Personal Archive," film clips presented by Peggy Ahwesh. ♦ June 2 at 8 and June 3-4 at 6 and 8: "Certain Women" (2004, Ahwesh and Bobby Abate). ♦ Films by Jacques Rivette. All films are in French. June 2 at 7 and June 3 at 9: "Duelle" (1976). ♦ June 2 at 9:30 and June 4 at 4:30: "Noroît" (1976). ♦ June 3 at 5:30 and June 4 at 7:30: "Merry-Go-Round" (1977-78).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Special screenings. May 31 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Man on a String" (1960, André de Toth). The 6:50 show is followed by a discussion with Elliott Stein. ♦ "The Exquisite World of Kihachiro Kawamoto." June 1 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: Short films, program one. ♦ June 2 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: Short films, program two. ♦ June 3 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Book of the Dead" (2005; in Japanese). ♦ A tribute to John Turturro. June 4 at 2 and 4:30: "Mac" (1992, Turturro). ♦ June 5 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Barton Fink" (1991, Joel Coen). ♦ June 6 at 6 and 9: "Quiz Show" (1994, Robert Redford).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. May 31-June 6 at 1, 3:45, 6:45, and 9:30: "Army of Shadows" (1969, Jean-Pierre Melville; in French). ♦ Through June 15: "B Noir." May 31 at 1, 4:30, and 8: "Crime of Passion" (†). ♦ May 31 at 2:45, 6:15, and 9:45: "Witness to Murder" (1954, Roy Rowland). ♦ June 1 at 1, 4:40, and 8:20: "711 Ocean Drive" (1950, Joseph M. Newman). ♦ June 1 at 3, 6:40, and 10:20: "Shield for Murder" (1954, Howard W. Koch). ♦ June 2-3 at 1:05, 4:45, and 8:25: "Thieves' Highway" (†). ♦ June 2-3 at 3, 6:40, and 10:10: "The Sleeping City" (1950, George Sherman). ♦ June 4 at 1, 4:40, and 8:20 and June 5 at 1: "Side Street" (1949, Anthony Mann). ♦ June 4 at 2:45, 6:25, and 10:05 and June 5 at 2:45: "Mystery Street" (1950, John Sturges). ♦ June 5 at 5:10 and 8:35: "The Big Night" (1951, Joseph Losey). ♦ June 5 at 6:45 and 10:10: "M" (1951, Losey). ♦ June 6 at 1, 4:30, and 8: "Nightfall" (1957, Jacques Tourneur). ♦ June 6 at 2:40, 6:10, and 9:40: "The Burglar" (1957, Paul Wendkos).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through June 27: The films of Michel Brault. June 6 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "Les Ordres" (1974; in French).

IFC CENTER

323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—The Films of Akira Kurosawa. June 2-4 at noon: "The Seven Samurai" (1954; in Japanese). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." June 2-3: "Superfly" (1972, Gordon Parks, Jr.).

LARA TOMLIN

TABLES FOR TWO
LAZZARA'S PIZZA CAFÉ

221 W. 38th St., upstairs (212-944-7792)—New Yorkers love the obscure: pseudo-speakeasies and no-name restaurants hiding behind fake storefronts. But visitors seem truly mystified when they're taken up a flight of iron stairs in a garment-district tenement building to a red-lit hallway (which at first seems only to lead to a seedy-looking rest room). A last-minute right turn reveals a sit-down dining room that looks something like a failed bordello. There are more red light bulbs, deep, determined mauve paint on one wall, and a tin ceiling; fire escapes are visible through dirty windows; gilt-framed chalkboards display specials and an incredibly high-end wine list. "Have you ever been here before?" Al, a bald, mustachioed man perpetually lumbering across the room, asks. He never quite makes eye contact through his thick lenses, so it's not always clear whom he is addressing. "Do you know what our pizza looks like?"

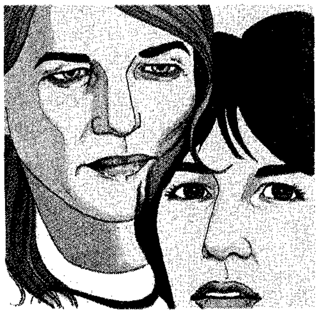
There's no reason to be here if you're not informed about the pizza—it's square, and not that big. Two grown men will need one and a half pies. It's not Sicilian: it has a seriously thin, delicate crust. There's often a burned blister of cheese looming in the center. The sauce is snappy. The plain pie is heaven—the crazy toppings, like a full serving of lasagna, tend to turn the pizza into soup. And don't stray too far from the pie. The specials chalkboard usually lists Buffalo-style fried calamari in blue-cheese sauce, an irresistibly disgusting combination of fat and grease. Eating the gnocchi is like filling up your stomach with rocks, and the salads are massive and doused with enough oil to make even the iceberg lettuce wilt. For dessert, there's cheesecake and tiramisu that tastes like freezer-burned Sara Lee.

Who patronizes such an oddball spot? There are a few clues close to the door. A flyer for Jahir and the Experiment's hip-hop disk (Lazzara's owners run a recording studio upstairs) is posted above a rack of the free fashion trade magazine *Fashion Mannuscript*. Hip-hop luminaries from Sean (Diddy) Combs to Russell Simmons and Jennifer Lopez are regular customers, but the place is mostly full of mid-level garmentos—earnest men and women, not as well dressed as one might expect, who take their business meetings here. Their presence gives the strange place some normalcy—at night, Spandex World, across the street, is shuttered, and the place turns positively spooky. (Open weekdays for lunch and Tuesdays through Fridays for dinner. Entrées $6.95-$18.)

—*Owen Phillips*

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
INTRUDER IN THE RUST

The young German-born director Dominik Moll caused a stir, or a shiver, with his quiet shocker of 2001, "With a Friend Like Harry." He had, it seemed, locked onto his ideal subject: the ease with which acquaintance can slide into threat. That dangerous motion continues in "Lemming," his new and faintly nauseating work, now playing at the Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. The plot unfolds in what moviegoers will recognize as Tativille: technophilic office space and bright, modern French housing. It seems a suitable setting for an inventor (Laurent Lucas) and his wife (Charlotte Gainsbourg), and all goes nicely until (a) an unidentified rodent blocks their plumbing, and (b) Charlotte Rampling comes to dinner. Which is the more intrusive event will be a matter for the viewer to decide. The first half of the film has a flat, mechanical pacing, but as the fear—and the spilled blood—begins to spread, Moll finds an added fluency. As for the downbeat coda, in which everything apparently returns to normal, what could be more ominous than that?



—*Anthony Lane*

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—Through June 21: "To Save and Project." May 31 at 6: "A Dirty Trick" (1959, Pietro Germi; in Italian). ♦ May 31 at 8: "The Scientific Cardplayer" (1972, Luigi Comencini; in Italian). ♦ June 1 at 6:15: Short silent newsreels (1900-1912), introduced by Bryony Dixon. ♦ June 1 at 7:30: Short silent films (1900-1914), introduced by Dixon. ♦ June 2 at 6: "The Family Honor" (1920, King Vidor; silent) and a short silent film. ♦ June 2 at 6 and June 5 at 8: "Forest of Bliss" (1986, Robert Gardner). The June 2 screening is introduced by the director. ♦ June 2 at 8 and June 4 at 3: "Rivers of Sand" (1974, Gardner). The June 2 screening is introduced by the director. ♦ June 2 at 8: "Bunny Lake Is Missing" (1965, Otto Preminger). ♦ June 3 at 2 and June 5 at 6: "New Frontier" (1939, George Sherman). ♦ June 3 at 3:30 and June 5 at 7:30: "True Grit" (1969, Henry Hathaway). ♦ June 3 at 6 and June 5 at 6: "Dead Birds" (1964, Gardner). ♦ June 3 at 6:15: "M" (1931, Fritz Lang; in German), introduced by Mark-Paul Meyer. ♦ June 3 at 8:30: "3:10 to Yuma" (1957, Delmer Daves). ♦ June 4 at 1: Short silent films (1897-1914), including "War Be Cursed" (1914, Alfred Machin), introduced by Meyer. ♦ June 4 at 5: "The Queen of Spades" (1949, Thorold Dickinson). ♦ Through Aug. 13: Films from CalArts. For more information, go to www.moma.org. May 31 at 6: "Down These Mean Streets," a short-film program. ♦ May 31 at 8: Short films, including "An Injury to One" (2002, Travis Wilkerson). ♦ June 3 at 8: Short films, including works by David Salle (1973-74). ♦ June 7 at 6:30: Short Pixar films. ♦ "Prix Jean Vigo." All films are in French. June 1 at 6 and June 3 at 3:45: "Certaines Nouvelles" (†) and "June Tenth, 1944" (1962, Maurice Cohen). ♦ June 1 at 8:15 and June 3 at 2: "Story of Paul" (1974, René Feret). ♦ Through June 29: The Films of James Mangold. June 4 at 2: "Heavy" (1995). ♦ June 4 at 4:15: "Walk the Line" (2005).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through July 9: The films of Stanley Kubrick. June 3-4 at 3 and 6:30: "2001: A Space Odyssey" (1968).

PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—Special screenings. May 31 at 9: "What Is a Man Without a Moustache?" (2005, Hrvoje Hribar; in Croatian). ♦ June 1-6 at 9: "Long Knives Night" (†) and "Reporting from the Rabbit Hole" (2001, Victor Dashuk; in Russian and Belarusian). ♦ June 2-3 at 6:30: "Whiskey on a Sunday" (2006, Jim Dziura). ♦ June 3 at 11: "Picnic at Hanging Rock" (1975, Peter Weir). ♦ June 5 at 7: "Horrors of War" (2006, Peter John Ross and John Whitney).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." June 2-3: "Delicatessen" (1991, Marc Caro and Jean-Pierre Jeunet; in French).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—In revival. June 4 at 3 and June 6 at 4:30: "Visions of Light" (1992, Arnold Glassman, Todd McCarthy, and Stuart Samuels).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—New Italian films. Except where noted, all films are in Italian. June 1 at 1:15 and 6: "Crime Novel" (2005, Michele Placido). ♦ June 1 at 3:45 and 8:45 and June 4 at 2: "The Passion of Joshua the Jew" (2006, Pasquale Scimeca). ♦ June 2 at 1 and 6:15: "Sacred Heart" (2005, Ferzan Ozpetek). ♦ June 2 at 3:30 and 9: "Along the Ridge" (2006, Kim Rossi Stuart). ♦ June 3 at 2: "Fire at Me" (2006, Lamberto Lambertini). ♦ June 3 at 4:30 and June 6 at 1:30 and 6: "The Listening" (2006, Giacomo Martelli). ♦ June 3 at 6:45: and June 5 at 6:15 "The Goodbye Kiss" (2006, Michele Soavi). ♦ June 3 at 9:15: "La Terra" (2006, Sergio Rubini). ♦ June 4 at 4:30: "My Best Enemy" (2006, Carlo Verdone). June 4 at 6:45 and June 5 at 2: Short-film program, including "Loo" (2005, Bruno

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Bozzetto). ♦ June 4 at 9:15 and June 6 at 3:45: "Mater Natura" (2005, Massimo Andrei). ♦ June 5 at 4 and 8:30: "The Wind Blows Around" (2005, Giorgio Diritti; in French, Italian, and Occitan).

READINGS AND TALKS

"THALIA BOOK CLUB"
Michael Cunningham, the author of "The Hours," talks with the writer Stacey D'Erasmo about his latest novel, "Specimen Days." (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. May 31 at 7.)

"LIVE FROM THE NYPL"
David Remnick, the editor of this magazine, discusses his new collection, "Reporting: Writings from *The New Yorker*," with Paul Holdengräber, the director of public programs at the New York Public Library. (Celeste Bartos Forum, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. 212-868-4444. May 31 at 7.)

"A KUBRICK ODYSSEY"
David Schwartz, the chief curator at the Museum of the Moving Image, discusses the director's oeuvre and kicks off the museum's monthlong Kubrick retrospective. (35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. 718-784-0077. June 3 at 1:30.)

"A TRIBUTE TO CLIFFORD ODETS"
A daylong celebration of the playwright's centennial includes a screening of the 1989 PBS documentary "Broadway Dreamers: The Legacy of the Group Theatre," a symposium on his later plays, his politics, and his time in Hollywood, and a reading of scenes from his plays. (Martin E. Segal Theatre Center, the Graduate Center, City University of New York, Fifth Ave. at 34th St. For more information, call 212-817-1861. June 5 from 10 to 8.)

"READING BETWEEN A AND B"
The poet Louise Glück is joined by Jay Hopler, Richard Siken, and Peter Streckfus. (11th Street Bar, 510 E. 11th St. No tickets necessary. June 5 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"MEDIA THAT MATTERS"
This socially conscious film festival tackles big issues (the Iraq war, global warming, gay rights) in short takes—the longest film presented is a mere eight and a half minutes long. The sixteen movies, which were chosen by a group of activists, filmmakers, and media professionals, will be screened this week for the first time. After that, they will be shown around the country and posted on a Web site, where there will also be film-specific suggestions for changing the world, one small step at a time. (The screening is on May 31 at 7 at the IFC Theatre, 323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. The Web site is www.mediathatmattersfest.org.)

RED HOOK WATERFRONT ARTS FESTIVAL
In recent years, Red Hook, Brooklyn, the setting for the 1954 film "On the Waterfront," has been gentrifying with the determination of a federal prosecutor. The Queen Mary 2 now docks there, the neighborhood is home to a new Fairway market, and an Ikea is expected to open there soon. Before the recent developments, though, this corner of Brooklyn became a haven for many artists. The festival, which started in 1995, features a slew of performers, including the band Radio Mundial, the improvisational theatre group Hip Hop Commedia, and the dance troupe Urban Bush Women. (June 3. For more information, call 718-287-2224. Note: The Brooklyn Waterfront Artists Coalition is also sponsoring self-guided studio tours this weekend. For more information, visit www.bwac.org.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
Two nondescript pieces of paper included in **Christie's** sale of ocean-liner memorabilia (June 1) remind us, once more, of the human tragedy of the sinking of the Titanic: "facing slips" from the mail bundles transported on the ship, stamped with the name of Oscar Woody, one of five mail clerks on board (none of whom survived). More cheerful artifacts include model ships, tableware from the Normandie, and a beautiful Wiener Werkstätte brass mirror designed by Josef Hoffmann for the Österreichischer Lloyd Triest shipping company. The note of luxury is echoed by the house's sale of fine and rare wine (June 3)—offering several vintages of Romanée-Conti and Château Pétrus—and a slightly more quotidian "house sale" of furnishings and decorations. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ The elegant amphoras, pelikes, and kraters in **Sotheby's** sale of antiquities (June 6) put one in a Keatsian mood: "What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape?" Another enigmatic item is an Egyptian red wooden mask in the sale, created some time between 1305 and 946 B.C., which stares out benevolently, its almond-shaped eyes sinuously outlined in blue. Not all the magnificent specimens in the house's auction of carpets (June 1) come from Persia; one, designed circa 1890 by John Henry Dearle, William Morris's chosen successor at Morris & Co., stands out for the richness of its ornamentation, a graceful, layered pattern of intertwining leaves, flowers, and arabesques. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

The Siren Music Festival brings indie rock to Coney Island in July.

MICHAEL WELDON

ON THE HORIZON

MOVIES
THE WILD EAST
June 16–July 1

Since 2002, the New York Asian Film Festival has been offering an annual trove of pop and pulp films from the East. This year's program, at Anthology Film Archives and the ImaginAsian, includes "Ab Tak Chhappan," an Indian film noir about a one-man police death squad; "Linda Linda Linda," from Japan, about three teen-age girls and their band; and the self-explanatory "Oh! My Zombie Mermaid." (www.subwaycinema.com.)

ART
GUERRILLA ARTISTS
June 30–Sept. 3

Graffiti's steady climb from urban-crime issue to art form will be documented with twenty pieces made by artists with such noms de spray can as Lady Pink, Daze, Crash, Tracy 168, and NOC 167. The Brooklyn Museum is the venue. (718-638-5000.)

NIGHT LIFE
ENTICING SOUNDS
July 15

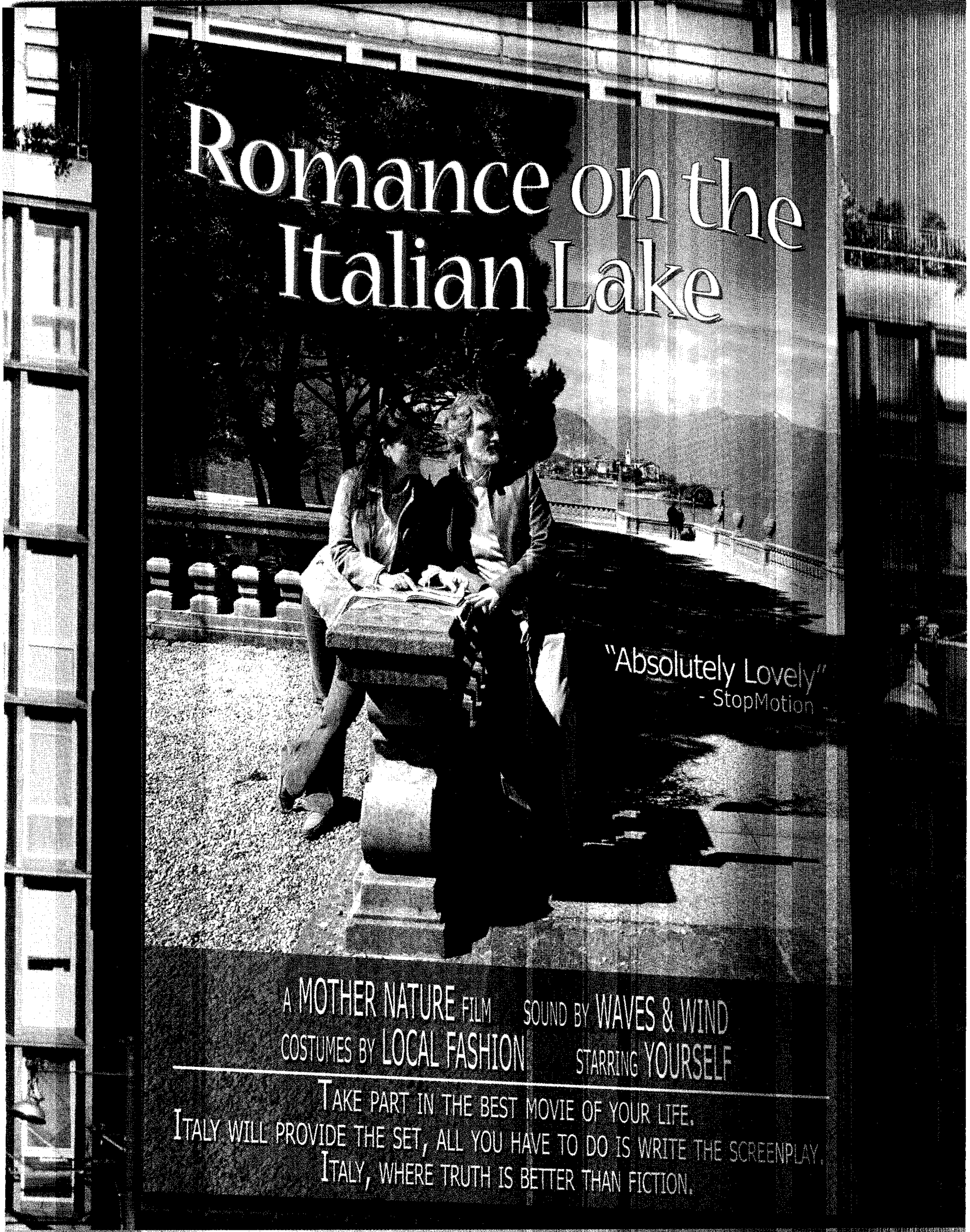
The daylong indie-rock gathering known as the Siren Music Festival returns to Coney Island for its sixth year. The performers include the Los Angeles-based goth-dance duo She Wants Revenge, England's tongue-in-cheek rockers Art Brut, the jittery Minneapolis band Tapes 'N Tapes, and others. (212-475-4022.)

THE THEATRE
FUNNY MAN
July 22

Martin Short stars in his new ersatz-autobiographical musical comedy, "Fame Becomes Me," co-conceived by Short, Marc Shaiman, and Scott Wittman. In addition to reprising famous characters like Ed Grimley and Jiminy Glick, Short, along with a cast of many, will perform such numbers as "Stepbrother de Jesus" and "Twelve Step Pappy." (212-239-6200.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
AFTER MAUPASSANT
July 22

Glimmerglass Opera may be conservative, but it likes to give new works a chance. This year brings the world première of Stephen Hartke's "The Greater Good," a work inspired by Maupassant's story "Boule de Suif." (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255.)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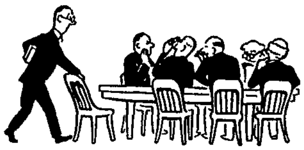
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
CITIZENS

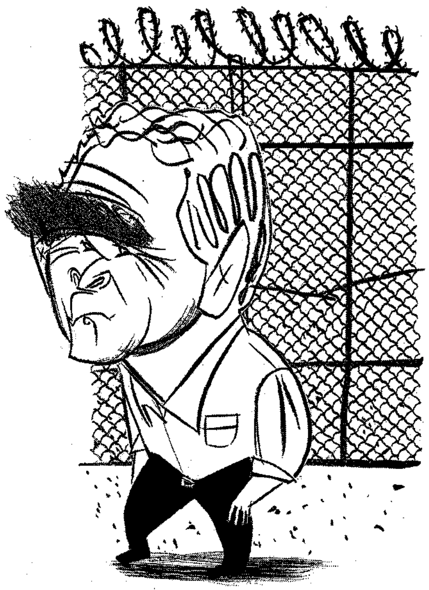


In a world amply populated with angry young Muslims, it is a question of some interest why a small number choose to become suicide bombers. President Bush addresses the matter in starkly religious language, consigning it to an eternal contest between good and evil. American scholars have begun to attack the problem with scientific method; Robert Pape, of the University of Chicago, for example, recently mustered data to argue that suicide attacks are a rational means by which the weak can humble the strong. To this potpourri of hypotheses can now be added a compelling work by anonymous bureaucrats in Great Britain, under the oddly redundant title "Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005."

On that summer morning, three young Muslim men blew themselves up on Underground cars, and a fourth immolated himself on a double-decker bus; fifty-two people died, and several hundred suffered injuries. The most striking aspect of the inquiry into the attacks, which was published earlier this month, is the extent to which it plumbs the suicide bombers' motivations.

The four men depicted in the report are in some respects unfathomable. When Shehzad Tanweer, a talented athlete who was twenty-two years old, bought snacks at a highway convenience store four hours before his death, he haggled over the change. Hasib Hussain, who was eighteen, strode into a McDonald's just half an hour before he killed himself and thirteen others. When the four men took leave of one another at King's Cross station, they hugged, and they appeared, the report says, "happy, even euphoric." To the credit of the British investigators, however, they were not satisfied merely to observe that the bombers had enrolled in an appealing death cult. They wanted to know how the men were radicalized on British soil—not to excuse them but to aid a strategy of prevention.

Three of the bombers were British citizens, and the report makes plain that this was not just a technical matter of passports or residence status. They were far from destitute; born to Pakistani immigrants, they attended secular state schools and received government and family support throughout their short lives. (The fourth bomber was a Jamaican immigrant who converted to Islam, and whose life was more troubled and erratic.) The ringleader, Mohammad Sidique Khan, even worked for a time at a British welfare agency; later, he was a well-liked teacher's aide. And yet citizenship failed to compete with the lure of enlistment in an imagined jihadi militia. Khan lost his job just before he began to plan the London bombings. In a video statement left for posthumous broadcast, he emphasized with every pronoun he chose that he had abandoned British identity for service in an enemy army: "Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support of them makes you directly responsible."



The report concludes that there is no consistent profile that could be used to help identify who might be vulnerable to such radicalization, and yet the biographies do show in some detail how the making of an Al Qaeda-inspired suicide bomber is an idiosyncratic narrative of push and pull. Alienation from citizenship or family and a loss of faith in secular opportunity create a pool of potential volunteers; preachers, recruiters, and Al Qaeda leaders take it from there. The British parliament's main intelligence-oversight committee, in a separate re-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

port, admits that Britain has failed to consider adequately how it might reduce the number of potential recruits: "We remain concerned that across the whole of the counter-terrorism community the development of the home-grown threat and the radicalisation of British citizens were not fully understood or applied to strategic thinking."

It seems obvious that citizenship, assimilation, religious tolerance—the basic ideals of an open, plural society—should play a prominent part in counterterrorism strategy, to at least complement the funds that governments pour so eagerly into concrete barriers, listening devices, and retina scanners. When President Bush promotes the spread of democracy abroad, he argues that the distractions of civic life offer a partial cure for terrorism. Yet he offers no comparable rhetoric, never mind a strategy, at home. The scant outreach to American Muslims that the Bush Administration undertakes, aside from occasional religious conferences and White House *iftars*, is left mainly to the F.B.I.

The results are predictably depressing: a startling number of America's several million Muslim residents think that the United States is not safe for them. A poll conducted by Zogby International just before the last Presidential election, for example, showed that more than a third of American Muslims believe that the Administration is waging a war on Islam; a similar number believe that "American society overall is disrespectful and intolerant toward Muslims"; and more than half said that they knew someone who had suffered discrimination. It is fair to assume that these numbers understate the problem. If you were a media-literate Muslim immigrant, would you express your frustration to a pollster on the telephone?

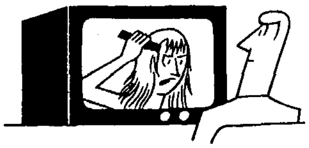
British and European Muslims are more often poor, unemployed, and trapped in segregated housing than their American counterparts, but this hardly seems grounds for self-congratulation or complacency, particularly in this country's current phase of fence-building and nationalism. The Bush Administration has failed to manage the connection between immigration policy and counterterrorism strategy; instead, the President is succumbing to immigrant-bashers. The nativists are ascendant in the Republican Party as final negotiations begin in Congress on a major immigration-reform bill that is rooted in a demagogic movement to strengthen border security (a worthy objective, but not one likely to be achieved by such craven symbolic gestures as the deployment of National Guard troops). It is not clear whether a new law will be passed this summer, or just how bad a bill it will be. Even if a compromise is reached that offers a reasonable path to citizenship for illegal immigrants who have long lived here, the price will almost certainly include an expansion of police powers and the re-categorizing of many immigration violations as felonies—a prescription for error and abuse.

Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff told the Washington *Post* last week that it is "very, very hard to detect" a jihadi terrorist who is "purely domestic, self-motivated, self-initiating." The population in which such radicalization may occur is, of course, the one that is on the receiving end of our hysterical immigration debate. To impress upon immigrants that the federal sheriff and his posse will be riding yet again, that detention and expulsion await those whose papers are not in order, and that obtaining citizenship will prove, at best, a risky ordeal is not only unnecessary and wrong; it is dangerous. Almost five years after September 11th, we remain burdened by a President who believes passionately that he is at war and yet has only the most tenuous grasp of his enemy.

—*Steve Coll*

HALLS OF ACADEME

THE ROOM



It's customary for graduate schools to steep their students in the cold realities of their future careers. Medical schools introduce pupils to sleep-deprived snacking; law schools equip them to brave articulate ridicule; business schools cull the weak. Students of film and television, by contrast, have been rather sheltered. But recently Columbia University introduced "Comedy Writers' Room," a master class in writing a sitcom pilot, taught by Tom Leopold, a former writer on "Cheers" and "Seinfeld." The idea was to re-create the Hollywood "room," where Tostito-scarfing writers slag one another's ideas and pitch their own jokes into the wee hours with the aim of overhauling that week's script by morning. Leopold's task, in other words, was to manufacture an experience that would combine the worst aspects of medicine, law, and business.

Last month, the dozen graduate students in Leopold's class took a field trip to hear some standup routines at Carolines, after which they chose Lori Chase, a comedian with a cackling laugh, to be their star. They sat her down and took notes on her backstory: her big move, with her husband, Will, a somewhat vain but successful actor, from the city to Bloomfield, New Jersey, where their new neighbors greeted them with food in Tupperware containers—that they later wanted back. Then the students took her situation and added their comedy: in the pilot of "The Lori Chase Show," Will became entirely vain; the couple's four- and six-year-old daughters, Grace and Daisy, were blended into a sassy ten-year-old named Liza; and that moment of Tupperware awkwardness became the catalyst for the worst day of the Chases' lives.

On a recent Tuesday afternoon, the class met in a small room in Dodge Hall for its finale, the "table read." Tom Leopold entered, wearing a pink oxford shirt and suède loafers, and looked around the table. The seats that in Hollywood would be occupied by skeptical network executives were here filled by visitors from the "Television as a Dramatic Medium" class. "If this many people watched UPN, it would still be a network," Leopold said. Pause for laughter. "Thank you—try the roast beef, everyone."

He pointed to Ken Kristensen and Colin Marshall, who had written the bulk of the pilot, in thirty-six hours, and continued, "This is the future of bad comedy writing, right here. These guys work fast; they can make it stink in a week." Marshall and Kristensen looked suitably flattered. They were already dressing the part: Marshall had dark-framed glasses and a neat oxford shirt, just like Leopold; Kristensen was wearing a sport coat and a surfing T-shirt and had just embarked on the South Beach diet.

The reading began, with Chase playing herself and local actors voicing the

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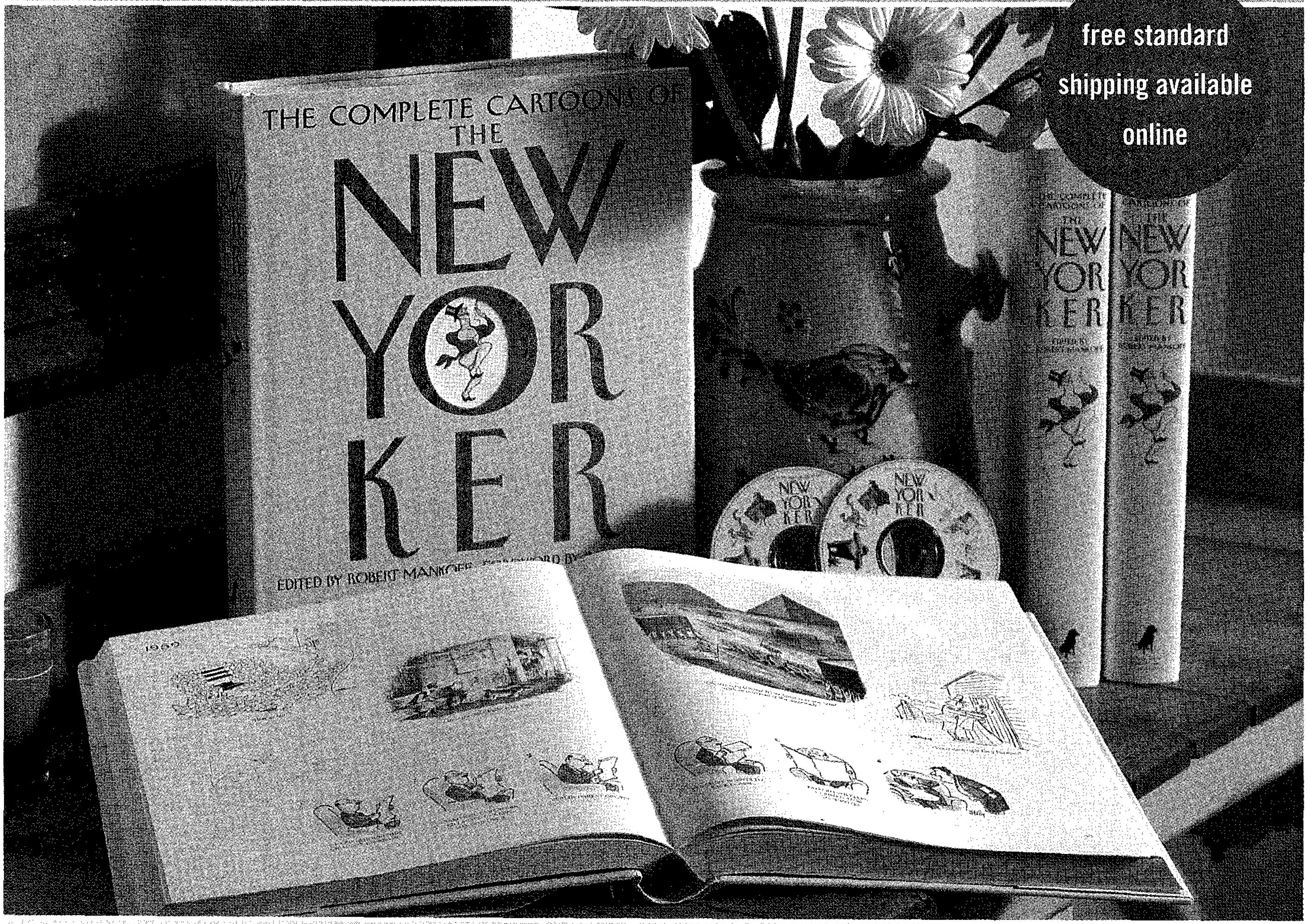
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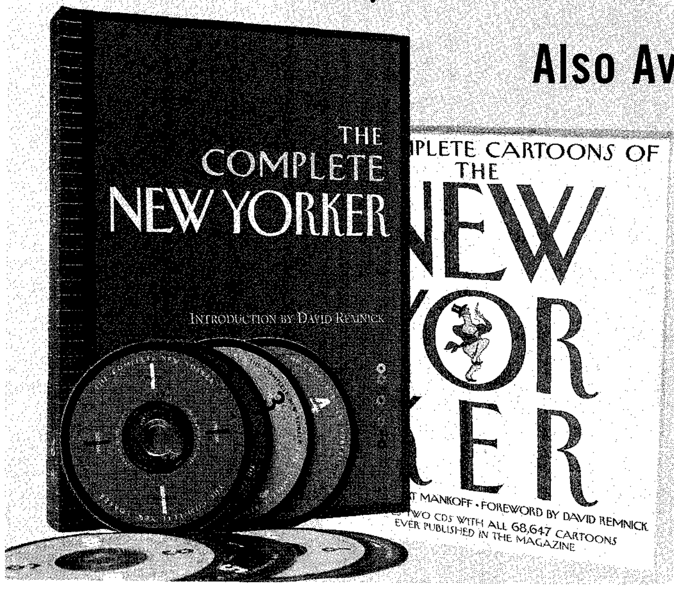
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other roles. In the opening scene, Liza, who is nervous about her first day at a new school, vomits on Lori. Then an oven explosion burns off Will's trademark cowlick, and a bumbling Russian handyman adds to the chaos. Annoying neighbors and mothers-from-hell are introduced, along with other sitcom staples: the prepubescent Liza wears a micro miniskirt and Will reacts with a sex joke; Lori's cell phone is knocked into a fish tank; and a "runner" about how the neighbors' cannoli "taste like ass" is called back, in a possible excess of zeal, six times.

The reading concluded with Lori archly telling her daughter, "Your father and I are playing Russian handyman tonight"—and Liza vomiting again. Chase told the class, "You guys did an amazing job of capturing my world!"

After the actors left, the class discussed how funny the man playing Angelo, a neighbor and stroke victim, had been. "It would have been great to have Angelo smoking, even after the stroke," Leopold said. "Though the network would be worried about all the letters from the American Stroke Society."

"He'd be dragging his oxygen tank," one student said.

"He does it secretly, in the back yard," Chase suggested.

"Puts the ashtray *on* the tank," the student continued, and everyone laughed.

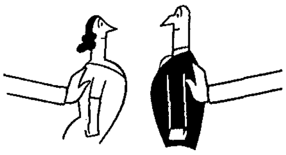
"See, this is what happens in the *room*," Leopold said. "All of a sudden, the series would be about working Angelo into every scene." He propped his loafers on the table and continued, "It's a nice little world. The story can be fixed so that there is one, the jokes can be fixed, all the dials can be turned up and down, but we like the vain actor husband and this girl trying to have a normal life in the suburbs. It's Lucy and Ricky moving out to Connecticut."

Colin Marshall said, "If we'd had even an extra hour or so to put the story together, it would have been a lot better." Their work was about to vanish into a drawer, without even the imprimatur of an agent's rejection.

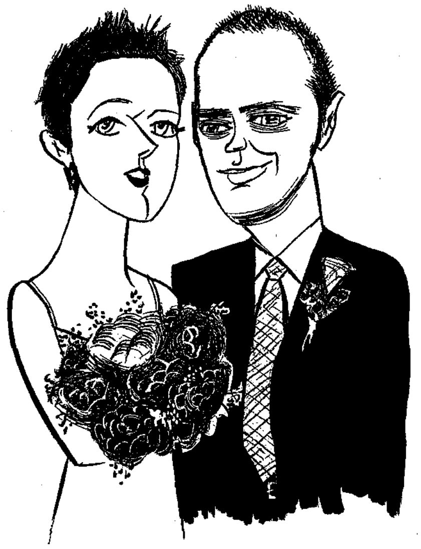
"Yeah, but I had a dinner thing," Leopold said. "Besides, the process is that it would all get rewritten now anyway. We'd order in Chinese and stay up all night giving Liza a sister." An even better one than the one they took away.

—*Tad Friend*

DEPT. OF AMPLIFICATION
MEG AND JASON



About six years ago, this reporter was advised by a friend who happened to be an Internet entrepreneur about a curious new activity that was being taken up among his circle of acquaintances. "It's called blogging," the friend said. "You should look into it." The term initially seemed to suggest something faintly indecent. Further investigation revealed the existence of a beguiling new medium, one in which the paradox of the public private life (best captured, as many things are, by Oscar Wilde, one of whose characters speaks of her diary as "simply a very young girl's record of her own thoughts and impressions, and consequently meant for publication") was being explored anew. The result, in November of 2000, was an article for this magazine entitled "You've Got Blog," which chronicled the courtship, on blog and off, of Jason Kottke, a Web designer and pioneer blogger, and Meg Hourihan, a co-founder of the company Pyra Labs, which had created Blogger, a product with which even the technologically inept could expose their inner musings to the world, should the world care to look upon them.



Meg Hourihan and Jason Kottke

The explosion of the blog medium in the years since—including Google's purchase of Pyra—hardly needs retelling. But what of Meg and Jason, who, by the article's conclusion, had progressed from instant-messaging each other across half the continent (Meg lived in San Francisco, Jason in Minneapolis), through veiled flirtation on their personal Web sites, Megnut.com and Kottke.org, to a nascent offline romance (as the article ended, Jason was driving across Wyoming, en route to a new job in San Francisco)? Neither Megnut.com nor Kottke.org is a particularly confessional site, but regular visitors were invited to read between the lines.

First, there was cohabitation in San Francisco, then, in December, 2002, mutual relocation to New York. The summer of 2003 sounded like fun—trips to Copenhagen and Paris—but disenchantment followed: when Meg took off for Nantucket in the summer of 2004, the move was conspicuously undertaken in the first-person singular. In December, 2004, she wrote a post entitled "A Sad Breakup"; and while its subject was Barbie, whose boyfriend, Ken, had sometime earlier been sidelined by Mattel for a new beau, Blaine, attentive readers wondered whether a more significant allusion was being made. Confirmation of a sort was provided in January, 2005, when Meg revealed that she had moved to New Hampshire—and, in an even more stunning turn of events, was making do with a dial-up Internet connection. Meanwhile, Jason was blogging moodily about hiring a man with a van to move his stuff across town.

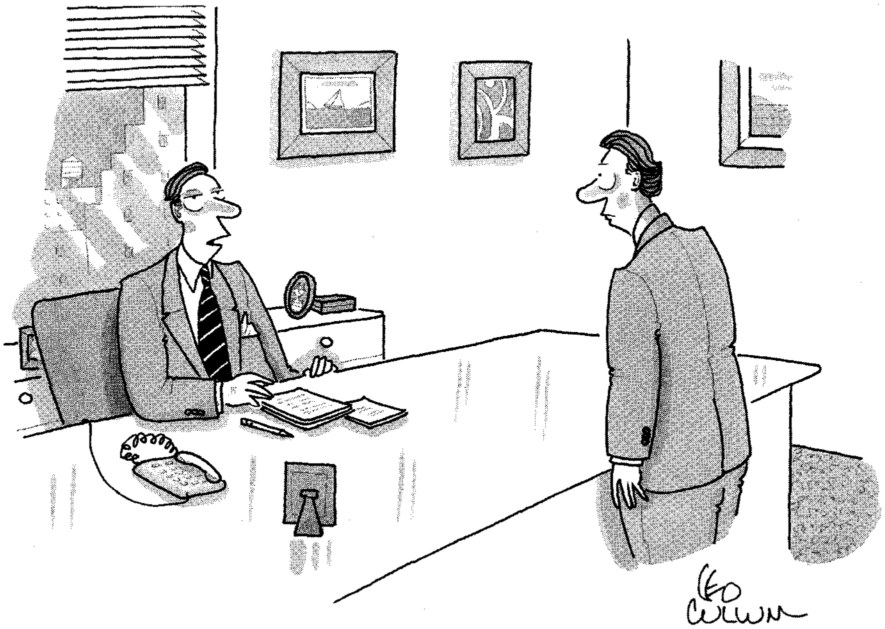
By May, 2005, however, Meg and Jason had both made reference to vacationing in Ireland. Then, in November, Meg informed her readers that she and Jason were engaged. Resolution of the most satisfying order was provided on March 28th this year, when Meg posted a photograph that showed her wearing a long white gown and clutching a large bouquet, mid-smooch with a be-suited Jason, under the heading "Married."

Their breakup, Meg and Jason explained over lunch the other day, had occurred for the usual reasons. "We just needed some time to figure out what we wanted from life and what we wanted from each other," Jason said. "It was a big change," he went on. "Not living with someone; not living with Meg; not living in Manhattan." ("Not having any furniture," Meg added.) They reconciled in March, when Meg was in New York to run a half marathon. "We were hanging out that day, and then I went home and I felt awful because we had had such a good time," Meg said. She instant-messaged Jason to say that they needed to talk; he replied that he was on his way over with something to tell her. "I thought he was going to say he had a new girlfriend, but he said that he thought we should get back together," she said.

These days, the couple live in a loft just south of Union Square. Meg has converted Megnut to an all-food site, and Jason is blogging full time. (Having experimented with "micropatronage," by asking readers for money—"I felt like I had fifteen hundred people who thought they were my boss"—Kottke.org is now funded by limited advertising.) Their wedding took place in the Starrett-Lehigh Building, the home of a number of hopeful startups in the first Internet boom. "Jason Kottke and Meg Hourihan Wed: Most Flickr'd Ceremony Ever," the tech gossip site Valleywag reported. Thousands of readers have visited Meg's Flickr page, where photographs of the wedding are posted. "A lasting positive effect of the San Francisco dot-com boom!" one visitor commented.

Jason and Meg agreed that living at least some of their lives online had been a positive experience, even though there were times when it was uncomfortable. "If you are looking to make friends and have experiences, you have to be open," Jason said, an observation that may apply as much to love as it does to blogging.

—*Rebecca Mead*



"Take the severance package, Hayward. The rest of the board wanted a ritual slaying."

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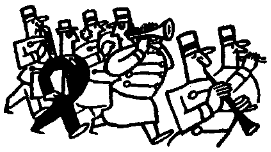
THE BOARDS
HEADPHONE JUNGLE



The other day, at a recording session for the cast album of "Tarzan," Disney's new Broadway musical, Phil Collins, the drummer and singer who wrote the show's songs, walked across the floor of a recording studio in midtown. The studio was capacious. At the far end, as at a dance in a high-school gymnasium, were a band and some singers. Collins was wearing a dark T-shirt, pale-green linen pants, and black canvas sneakers. His head is small and round, like a globe, and closely shaved, so that the dark patterns of hair suggest land and the bald parts suggest water. He was adding percussion parts to the tracks—a small task, but one that he preferred to see to himself.

Collins came to rest by a microphone and a music stand. He put on a pair of headphones, like a pilot. From a table, he picked up a cylinder about the size of a spice bottle and held it in his left hand, with his elbow bent. The cylinder was filled with pellets. Over a speaker an engineer said, "Everybody ready to run? Here it comes . . . Rolling."

With the fervor of citizens just released from colonial rule, the actors sang, "Two worlds, one family," while Collins moved the shaker back and forth in front of the microphone. In the control room, one man said to another, "The back was better on that one, but the front was better on the one before it."

Meanwhile, Collins stepped to the middle of the studio and embraced a man in a dark shirt and jeans. He put his arm around him while a third man took a photograph of them. They parted. Briefly, Collins walked in circles. He picked up a tambourine. He lifted one knee, apparently to study a detail on his pants leg. Finally, he sat on a stool and rocked back and forth several times.

Over the speaker a man in the control room said, "End of measure fifty-seven, we cut to seventy-eight. No vamp." On these takes, Collins played the tambourine. When they were finished, he walked into the control room. A young man approached. Collins lowered his head and listened to him intently. "Minestrone soup," the man said. "We found a place that makes it."

To eat his soup, Collins sat in a small room, with Tom Schumacher, the producer of Disney Theatrical Productions. Collins was talking about a big band that he organized a few years ago to play at the Montreux Jazz Festival. "I live in Switzerland, right down the road from the festival, and they gave me one night to do anything I wanted," he said. "Drummers love big bands, because you get to set up pieces of music that are three or four measures down the line. Ba-ta-ba-ta-ba-ta-BAM." To prepare for the evening, he spent hours watching a video of how to play drums with brushes. "I never had to use them before," he said.

When someone asked Collins if he minded all the waiting around involved in a musical, he said that he was accustomed to it from having played in a band. Also, he said that his experience with the theatre began in childhood. When he was fourteen, he played the Artful Dodger in "Oliver!" in London's West End. "By that time, I had already played drums for nine years," he said. "My headmaster told me that I couldn't do the whole run. My parents took me out of school and put me in drama school, and that was the end of my education. Anyway, I did the role for several months, until my voice broke. I left, then went back and, at sixteen, played Oliver. Mostly what I was doing was looking at my watch and waiting to grow up. I would have had a dance band, but there weren't many around."

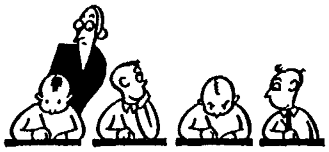
Phil Collins

"There was the Beatles," Schumacher said. "They could have used a better drummer," he added, helpfully.

Collins compressed his lips slightly. Then he nodded and said, "I'll tell him."

—Alec Wilkinson

MIND THE GAP DEPT.
ETON ON THE F.D.R.



In Great Britain this week, schoolchildren are off—free to veg in front of the telly or to terrorise their mums and governesses. Then it's back to class ("half term" is the occasion for breaking), with lessons in penmanship and geography straight on into July, while their American counterparts are happily running around the back yard with Super Soakers. "We have horrible summers in England," Lucy Mellors, a London transplant in Manhattan, said the other day. "What would be the point of having the whole summer off for holiday when it rains all the time?"

Mellors is the admissions director, or registrar, for the new British International School of New York, which will open this September in a residential tower overlooking the East River at Twenty-third Street. She was sitting with the school's co-founder, Elizabeth Perelstein, and headmaster, David Morse, in a makeshift office fashioned out of a one-bedroom flat on the tower's fifteenth floor, and explaining that although they would be hewing strictly to the English National Curriculum (maths, I.T., humanities, swimming), the academic calendar would conform to that of Spence or Collegiate, say, instead of Harrow. The flat, befitting such a compromise, was stocked with two sizes of stationery: U.S. Letter and the thinner, taller A4 that is standard in Europe.

"We will be playing cricket, soccer, and rounders, rather than baseball," Morse, who is from Yorkshire, said. For now, the school, with a target enrollment of a hundred, will cover "reception through year three"—that is, prekindergarten through second grade. Its prospective pupils include not only British expats but Anglophilic New Yorkers, as well as children from Australia, Singapore, Belgium, Holland, and Japan: all those who prefer Paddington Bear and regimented games to Stuart Little and nap time. Uniforms are to include jumpers and pinafores for girls, and blazers for boys ("But without bronze buttons, which we think are hideous," Mellors said).

A few matters, such as the school song and the lunch menu, remain unresolved. "'Jerusalem' is terribly popular," Mellors said, referring to the patriotic hymn with lyrics from William Blake. "And if there's any British food that's nutritionally sound they will be fed it." So far, however, officials have ruled out a few English favourites, like fish-and-chips and deep-fried Mars bars.

The classrooms, which for the time being consist mainly of exposed beams, scattered nails, and drywall, are to occupy the bottom three floors of the tower, with the best view saved for the library, whose books have not yet arrived from the motherland. ("It'll be things like 'The Secret Garden,' " Mellors said.) Another European touch: getting to the swimming pool and the gymnasium requires walking outside along a patio where residents of the tower like to sunbathe—sometimes topless.

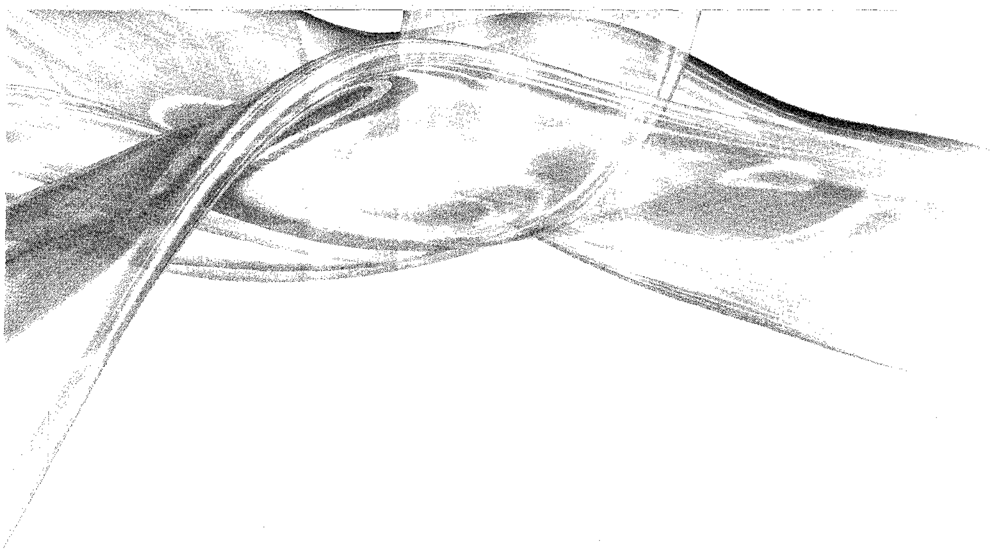
Last Wednesday, in the interest of recruiting, the British International School sponsored a reception at a global human-resources conference in midtown. Anthony Millard, the chairman of the school's board of governors, told guests that he'd served for fifteen years as the "headmaster of a public school," before adding, "*We* call them public schools, anyway. *You* call them private schools."

David Morse addressed the crowd: "If you can spare the time in your schedules in September—in autumn, as we say—you can come and visit us, and the children will give you a warm welcome. And I can ensure an excellent cup of English tea."

Meanwhile, the conference attendees drank champagne and spoke the universal language of H.R.: "international assignment management," "expatriate support services," "employee mobility."

John Lindfield, an official at the British consulate, said that his own children attend the American Community School in London, and have mastered the art of shifting their spelling to suit the audience. On the matter of whether the American or the British style of education is superior, he employed an old English idiom. "It's really horses for courses," he said.

—Ben McGrath



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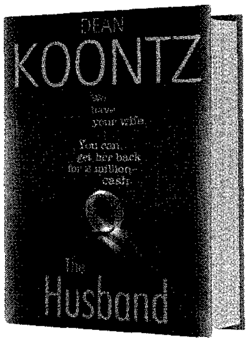

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PERSONAL HISTORY

MOVING ON

A love story.

BY NORA EPHRON

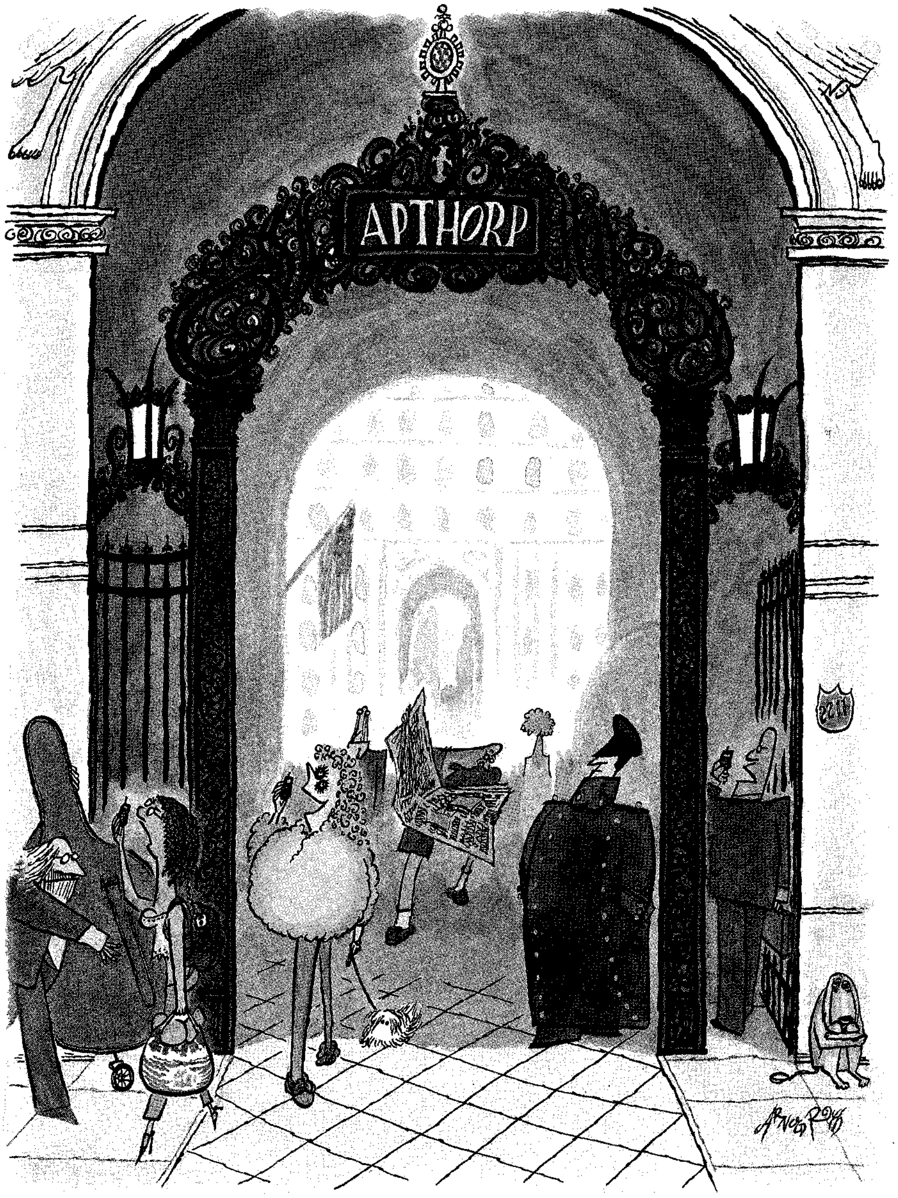
In February, 1980, two months after the birth of my second child and the simultaneous end of my marriage, I fell madly in love. I was looking for a place to live, and one afternoon I walked just ten steps into an apartment on the Upper West Side of Manhattan and my heart stood still. This was it. At first sight. Eureka. Ten steps in and I said, "I'll take it."

The apartment was huge. It was on the fifth floor of the Apthorp, a famous stone pile at the corner of Broadway and Seventy-ninth Street. The rent was fifteen hundred dollars a month, which, by Manhattan standards, was practically a bargain. Trust me, it was. In addition, I had to pay the previous tenant twenty-four thousand dollars in key money (as it's known in New York City) for the right to move in. I didn't have twenty-four thousand dollars. I went to a bank and borrowed the money. No one in the building could believe that I would pay so much in key money for a rental apartment; it was an astronomical amount. But the apartment had beautiful rooms (most of them painted taxicab yellow, but that could easily be fixed); high ceilings; lots of light; two gorgeous (although nonworking) fireplaces; and five, count them, five bedrooms. It seemed to me that if I lived in the building for twenty-four years the fee would amortize out to only a thousand dollars a year, a very small surcharge. I mean, we're talking about only $2.74 a day, which is less than a cappuccino at Starbucks. Not that there was a Starbucks then. And not that I was planning to live in the Apthorp for twenty-four years. I was planning to live there forever. Till death did us part. So it would probably amortize out to even less. That's how I figured it. (I should point out that I don't normally use the word "amortize" unless I'm trying to prove that something I can't really afford is not just a bargain but practically free. This usually involves dividing the cost of the item I can't afford by the number of years I'm planning to use it, or, if that doesn't work, by the number of days or hours or minutes, until I get to a number that is less than the cost of a cappuccino.)

But forget the money. This, after all, is not a story about money. It's a story about love. And all stories about love begin with a certain amount of rationalization.

I had never planned to live on the Upper West Side, but after a few weeks I couldn't imagine living anywhere else, and I began, in my manner, to make a religion out of my neighborhood. This was probably a consequence of my not having any other religion in my life, but never mind. I was a block from H & H Bagels and Zabar's. I was half a block from a subway station. There was an all-night newsstand across the street. On the corner was La Caridad, the greatest Cuban-Chinese restaurant in the world, or so I told my friends, and I made a religion of it, too.

But my true religious zeal focussed on the Apthorp itself. I honestly believed that at the lowest moment in my adult life I'd been rescued by a building. All right, I'm being melodramatic, but that's what I believed. I'd left New York City a year earlier to move to Washington, D.C., for what I sincerely thought would be the rest of my life. I'd tried to be cheerful about it. But the horrible reality kept crashing in on me. I would stare out the window of my Washington apartment, which had a commanding view of the lions at the National Zoo. The lions at the National Zoo! Oh, the metaphors of captivity that leaped to mind! The lions lived in a large, comfortable space, like me, and had plenty of food, like me. But were they happy? Et cetera. At other times, the old Clairol ad—"If I've only one life to live, let me live it as a blonde"—reverberated through my brain, although my



To move into the Apthorp was to enter a state of giddy, rent-stabilized delirium.

ARNOLD ROTH

version of it had nothing to do with hair color. If I have only one life to live, I thought, self-pityingly, why am I living it here? But then, of course, I would remember why: I was married, and my husband lived in Washington, and I was in love with him, and we had one baby and another on the way.

When my marriage came to an end, I realized that I would no longer have to worry about whether the marginal neighborhood where we lived was ever going to have a cheese store. I would be free to move back to New York City—which was not just the Big Apple but Cheese Central. But I had no hope that I'd find a place to rent that I could afford that had room enough for us all.

When you give up your apartment in New York and move to another city, New York becomes the worst version of itself. Someone I know once wisely said that the expression "It's a nice place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there" is completely wrong where New York is concerned; the opposite is true. New York is a very livable city. But when you move away and become a visitor the city seems to turn against you. It's much more expensive (because you have to eat all your meals out and pay for a place to sleep) and much more unfriendly. Things change in New York; things change all the time. You don't mind this when you live here; it's part of the caffeinated romance of the city that never sleeps. But when you leave you experience change as a betrayal. You walk up Third Avenue planning to buy a brownie at a bakery you've always been loyal to, and the bakery's gone. Your dry cleaner moves to Florida; your dentist retires; the lady who made the pies on West Fourth Street vanishes; the maître d' at P. J. Clarke's quits, and you realize you're going to have to start from scratch tipping your way into the heart of the cold, chic young woman now at the door. You've turned your back for only a moment, and suddenly everything's different. You were an insider, a native, a subway traveller, a purveyor of tips into the good stuff, and now you're just another frequent flyer, stuck in a taxi on the Grand Central Parkway as you wing in and out of LaGuardia. Meanwhile, you read that Manhattan rents are going up, they're climbing higher, they've reached the stratosphere. It seems that the moment you left town they put up a wall around the place, and you will never manage to vault over it and get back into the city again. The apartment in the Apthorp seemed like an urban miracle. I'd found a haven. And the architecture of the building added to the illusion.

The Apthorp, which was built in 1908 by the Astor family, is twelve stories high and the size of a full city block. From the street, it's lumpen, Middle European, and solid as a tanker, but its core is a large courtyard with two marble fountains and a lovely garden. Enter the courtyard, and the city falls away; you find yourself in the embrace of a beautiful sheltered park. There are stone benches where you can sit in the afternoon as your children run merrily around, ride their bicycles, fight with one another, and threaten to fall into the fountain and drown. In the spring, there are tulips and azaleas, in summer pale-blue hostas and hydrangeas.

Most people who don't live in New York have no idea that New Yorkers have exactly the same sense of neighborhood that supposedly exists in small-town America; in the Apthorp, this sense is magnified, because the courtyard provides countless opportunities for residents to bump into one another and eventually learn one another's names. At Halloween, those of us with small children turned the courtyard street lamps into a fantasy of pumpkinheaded ghosts; in December the landlords erected an electric menorah, which coexisted with a Christmas tree covered with twinkle lights.

As it happened, I had several acquaintances who lived in the building, and a few of them became close friends—at least in part because we were neighbors. The man I was seeing, whom I eventually married, managed to tip his way to a lease on a top-floor apartment. My sister Delia and her husband moved into the building; she, too, planned to live there until the day she died. When Delia and I worked together writing movies, it was a simple matter of her coming down from her apartment, crossing the courtyard, and coming up to mine; on rainy days, she could even take an underground route. My friend Rosie O'Donnell took an apartment on the top floor and became so captivated by a doorman named George, who had a big personality, that she booked him onto her talk show. Like most Apthorp doormen, George did not actually open the door—which was, incidentally, a huge, heavy iron gate that you often desperately needed help with—but he did provide a running commentary on everyone who lived in the building, and whenever I came home he filled me in on the whereabouts of my husband, my boys, my babysitter, my sister, my brother-in-law, and even Rosie, who painted her apartment orange, installed walls of shelves for her extensive collection of Happy Meal toys, feuded with her neighbors about her dogs, and fought with the landlords about the fact that her washing machine was somehow irrevocably hooked up to the bathtub drain. Then she moved out. I was stunned. I couldn't believe that anyone would leave the Apthorp voluntarily. I was never going to leave. They will take me out feet first, I said.

Every so often, an ambulance pulled into the courtyard and did take a tenant out feet first, and within minutes the landlords would be deluged with inquiries about a possible vacancy, most of them from tenants who had seen the ambulance come in or out (or had heard about it from George) and wanted to upgrade to a larger space.

At the time I moved in, the Apthorp was owned by a consortium of elderly persons—although, come to think of it, they were not much older than I am now. One of them was a charming, courtly gentleman, active in all sorts of charities involving Holocaust survivors. He lived long enough to be taken to court for a number of things, none of them the crime that I happen to believe he was guilty of, which was lining his pockets with cash payoffs made by people who were either moving in or moving out of the building. I was very fond of him and his sporty red Porsche, which he drove right up to the day he was taken to the hospital. There he took his last kickback, from neighbors of mine, and died. The kickback was part of the two hundred and eighty-five thousand dollars in key money my neighbors had charged a new tenant for the right to take over their lease. That's right. Someone paid two hundred and eighty-five thousand dollars in key money to move into the Apthorp. How was this possible? What was the thinking? Actually, I could guess: the thinking was that over fifty-six years the two hundred and eighty-five thousand dollars would amortize out to four cappuccinos a day. Grande cappuccinos. Mucho grande cappuccinos.

MAN IN STREAM

You stand in the brook, mud smearing
your forearms, a bloodied mosquito on your brow,
your yellow T-shirt dampened to your chest
as the current flees between your legs,
amber, verdigris, unravelling
today's story, last night's travail . . .

You stare at the father beaver, eye to eye,
but he outstares you—you who trespass in his world,
who have, however unwilling, yanked out his fort,
stick by tooth-gnarled, mud-clabbered stick,
though you whistle vespers to the wood thrush
and trace flame-flicker in the grain of yellow birch.

Death outpaces us. Upended roots
of fallen trees still cling to moss-furred granite.
Lichen smolders on wood rot, fungus trails in wisps.
I wanted a day with cracks, to let the godlight in.
The forest is always a nocturne, but it gleams,
the birch tree tosses its change from palm to palm,

and we who unmake are ourselves unmade
if we know, if only we know
how to give ourselves in this untendered light.

—*Rosanna Warren*

I lived in the Apthorp in a state of giddy delirium for about ten years. The water in the bathtub often ran brown, there was probably asbestos in the radiators, and the exterior of the building was encrusted with soot. Also, there were mice. Who cared? My rent slowly inched up—the Rent Guidelines Board allowed increases of around eight per cent every two years—but the apartment was still a bargain. By this time, the real-estate boom had begun in New York, and the newspapers were full of shocking articles about escalating rents; there were one-room apartments in Manhattan renting for two thousand dollars a month. I was paying the same amount for eight rooms. I felt like a genius.

Meanwhile, there were unhappy tenants in the building, suing the landlords over various grievances; I couldn't imagine why. What did they want? Service? A paint job every so often? The willing replacement of a broken appliance? There were even residents who complained about the fact that the building didn't allow your Chinese food to be brought up to your apartment. So what? Every time I walked into the courtyard at the end of the day, I fell in love all over again.

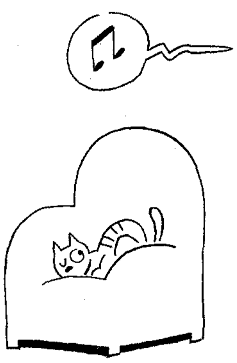
My feelings were summed up perfectly by a policeman who turned up one night to handle an altercation on my floor. My next-door neighbor was a kind and pleasant professor, the sort of man who would not hurt a flea; his son often left his bicycle in the vestibule outside our apartment. A neighbor down the hall, an accountant, became angry about the professor's son's bicycle, which he apparently thought was an eyesore, and it probably was. One afternoon, he decided to put it directly in front of the professor's door, blocking it. The professor found the bike there and returned it to its spot in the hallway. The accountant put it back in front of the door, once again blocking it. There was quite a lot of noisy crashing about while all this was going on, and it got my attention; as a result, I was lurking at my front door, peeking out into the vestibule, when the final chapter of the drama occurred.

The professor had just put the bicycle back out in the hall, and he, too, was waiting inside his front door hoping to catch the accountant in the act of once again moving it. Both of us stood there idiotically looking through the sheer curtains on our glass-panelled front doors. Sure enough, the accountant came down the hall and moved the bicycle so that it blocked the professor's door. At that moment, the professor flung his door open and began shouting at the accountant, whom, incidentally, he towered over. Within seconds, he lost it completely and slugged the accountant. It was incredibly exciting. The accountant called the police. The police arrived in short order. Since I, owing to my nosiness, had been a witness to the incident, I invited myself to the meeting with the police and my neighbors. The meeting took place in the professor's rent-stabilized apartment, which had even more bedrooms than mine. Each man told his version of events, and then I told mine. I have to say that mine was the best version, since it included a short, extremely insightful, and probably completely irrelevant digression about the impatience that childless people have for people with children (and bicycles). You had to be there. Anyway, when we were all finished one of the policemen shook his head and stood up. "Why can't you people get along?" he said as he headed for the door. "I would kill to live in this building."

Eventually, I began to have a recurring dream about the Apthorp—or, to be accurate, a recurring nightmare. I dreamed I had accidentally moved out of the building, realized it was the worst mistake of my life, and couldn't get my lease back. I have had enough psychoanalysis to know not to take such dreams literally, but it's nonetheless amazing to me that, when my unconscious mind searched for a symbol of what I would most hate to lose, it came up with my apartment.

Around 1990, rumors began to spread that there was about to be a change in the rent laws: under certain circumstances, rent stabilization could be abolished, and landlords would be able to raise rents to something known as fair-market value. I refused to pay any attention. My neighbors were obsessed with what might happen; they suggested that our rents might be raised to eight or ten thousand dollars a month. I thought that they were being unbelievably neurotic. Rent stabilization was an indelible part of New York life, like Gray's Papaya. It would never be tampered with. I was willing to concede (well, not too willing) that under certain circumstances there might be some justice in the new law; I could understand that you could make a case (a weak case) that people like me had been getting away with a form of subsidized housing for years; I could see (dimly) that the landlords were entitled to something. But I was sure that if our rents were raised the hike would be a reasonable one. After all, the tenants in the building were a family. The landlords understood that. They would never do anything so unreasonable as to double or triple our rents. This moment of innocence on my part was comparable to the moment—early in all love stories that end badly—when a wife discovers the faintest whiff of another woman's perfume on her husband's shirt, decides it's nothing, and goes blithely about her business. I went blithely about my business. And then the building hired a manager named Barbara Ross.

Miss Ross was a small, frightening woman with pale-white skin, bright-red lips, and a huge, jet-black beehive of hair on top of her head. The beehive was so outsized and bizarre that it reminded me of the nineteen-fifties urban legend about the woman who teased her hair so much that cockroaches moved in. Her voice dripped honey, which made her even more terrifying. She was either forty years old or seventy, no one knew. She wore pink silk shantung suits with gigantic shoulder pads. She lurked everywhere. She lived in New Jersey, but she spent Thursday nights in the building office, and rumor had it that she sneaked around in her bare feet, trying to catch the elevator operators napping. She issued memos discouraging children from playing ball in the courtyard. She repaved the courtyard and covered the cobblestones with tar. She had a way of coming upon you in the hallway and making you feel guilty even if you were entirely innocent. She was, in short, a character from a nightmare, so much so that she instantly became a running character in mine: I began to dream that I had accidentally moved out of the Apthorp, realized it was the worst mistake of my life, and couldn't get my lease back because of Miss Ross.



Meanwhile, the unthinkable happened. The state legislature passed a luxury-decontrol law stating that any tenant whose rent was more than two thousand dollars a month and who earned more than two hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year would automatically be removed from rent stabilization. I was stunned. I could understand the new law applying to new tenants, but how on earth could it apply to those of us who had lived in the building for years under the implicit bargain involved in rent stabilization? I had never gotten a paint job from the building, I'd never even asked for one, and now the landlords were about to treat me as if I were living in a luxury apartment. It was totally unfair! It was completely unjust! It was wrong! It was practically unconstitutional! It was also, of course, not remotely compelling to anyone in the outside world. I made a very decent living. I was going to have my rent raised. What's more, as far as I knew, I was going to be the first person in the building to undergo the experience. And no one cared. Even I wouldn't have cared if I hadn't been me. On the other hand, I wasn't exactly me. I was in love. I was a true believer, just like one of those French villagers in the Middle Ages who come to believe they've seen the tears of St. Cecilia on a scrap of oilcloth; I was a character in a story about mass delusion and the madness of crowds. I was, in short, completely nuts.

And so I went to see Miss Ross. As I recall, I gave a tender speech about my love for the building. It was fantastically moving, if not to her. She informed me that my rent was going to be tripled. We negotiated. She dropped the price. She dropped it just enough for me to believe that I had managed a small victory. How much did she drop it to? I can't possibly tell you. I'm too embarrassed to type the number. Even if I assured you that in the context of New York rents it wasn't that outrageous, you'd never believe me. The point is, I agreed to pay it. I signed a new lease.

I signed because I had enough money to pay the rent but not nearly enough to buy an apartment nearly as nice anywhere in the city.

I signed because my accountant was able, in that way accountants have, to persuade me that the money I would pay in rent was less than I would pay in monthly maintenance plus mortgage interest on a co-op apartment.

I signed because I was, as you already know, an expert in rationalization, and I convinced myself that there were huge savings involved in my staying in the building. The cost of moving, for instance. The cost of new telephone service. The cost of the postage required to notify my friends that I would be living at a new address. The cost of furniture, in case I needed new furniture for the apartment I hadn't found and wasn't moving into. The hours and days and possibly even weeks of my time that would be wasted trying to reach the cable company—during which time I might instead write a great novel and earn a small fortune that would more than pay for the rent increase.

But, as I said, this isn't a story about money. This is a story about love. I signed the lease because I wasn't ready to get a divorce from my building.

Many years ago, when I was in analysis, my therapist used to say, "Love is homesickness." What she meant was that you tend to fall in love with someone who reminds you of one of your parents. This, of course, is one of those things that analysts always say, even though it isn't really true. Just about anyone on the planet is capable of reminding you of something about one of your parents, even if it's only a dimple. But I don't mean to digress. The point I want to make is that love may or may not be homesickness, but homesickness is definitely love.

My apartment in the Apthorp was really the only space that my children and I had ever lived in together. Since the day we moved in, we had never locked the door. It was the place where Max got his head stuck in a cake pan and Jacob learned to tie his shoelaces. My husband, Nick, and I were married there, in front of the nonworking living-room fireplace. It was a symbol of family. It was an emblem of the moment in my life when my luck changed. It was part of my identity—or, at least, part of my wishful thinking about my identity. Because it was on the unfashionable West Side, just living there made me feel virtuous and brainy. Because it was a rental, it made me feel unpretentious. Because it was shabby, it made me feel chic. In short, it was home in a profound, probably narcissistic, and, I suspect, all too typical way, and it seemed to me that no place on earth would ever feel the same.

The whammies began to mount up. A mysterious dead body was found on the roof of the building. One of the apartments caught fire. An apartment on the eleventh floor was robbed, and the housekeeper was assaulted.

And then truly shocking things began to happen. The landlords cleaned the building! The landlords, who had basically done nothing to the building since we moved in, sandblasted the soot from the exterior, replaced pipes, redid the elevators, and painted the elevator and lobby ceilings gold. They dressed the building employees in braid-trimmed uniforms with epaulets; the staff began to look like a Hispanic version of Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. The senior landlord, a man named Nason Gordon, removed the mailbox from the building entrance and replaced it with a large marble statue of a naked woman, which the tenants instantly christened Our Lady of the Apthorp. He planted horrible white stucco urns outside the entrance, and dotted the courtyard with ludicrous statues of lions. The tenants experienced all these changes—every last one—as acts of hostility. Clearly, the improvements were being made for one reason and one reason alone—to raise our rents. Which was true; every time the landlords spent money on the building, they trotted off to the Rent Guidelines Board and asked for rent increases based on their expenditures. As a result, more and more tenants lurched toward luxury decontrol and a state of absolute panic. The fear was exacerbated by the fact that the new law made it possible for landlords to be utterly capricious about the increases. After all, what was fair-market value for an eight-room apartment in a city where there were almost no eight-room apartments for rent?

The nineteen-nineties were cresting, and there was a huge amount of money out there in the streets of New York. Empty apartments in the Apthorp were renovated, Miss Ross picked out garish chandeliers for them, and rich tenants moved in. One of the new tenants was actually paying twenty-four thousand dollars a month in rent. Twenty-four thousand dollars a month—and you still couldn't get the doorman to open the gate or have the Chinese food delivered to you. Rich men getting divorces moved in. Movie stars came and went.

The courtyard, once an idyllic spot full of happy, laughing children, was suddenly crowded with idling limousines waiting for the new tenants to be spirited away to their fabulous midtown careers. Angry tenants waved petitions and legal papers and spread rumors of further impending rent rises.

My lease expired again, and Miss Ross called to tell me that my rent was being raised. The landlords were willing to give me a three-year lease—ten thousand dollars a month the first year, eleven thousand the second, twelve thousand the third. My rent had effectively been raised four hundred per cent in three years.

And, just like that, I fell out of love. Twelve thousand dollars a month is a lot of cappuccino. And guess what? I don't drink cappuccino. I never have. I called a real-estate broker and began to look at apartments. Unrequited love's a bore, as Lorenz Hart once wrote. It had taken me significantly longer to come to that realization in the area of real estate than it ever had in the area of marriage, but I was finally, irrevocably there. Since my love affair with the building was one-sided, falling out of love was fairly uncomplicated. My children were grown and unable to voice the sorts of objections they had put forth during early exploratory conversations on the topic of moving, when they implored me not to leave the only home they'd ever known. My husband was up for anything. My sister was already on the street, looking for a new place, my sister—who had been quoted in the *Times* talking about the "heart and soul" of the Apthorp—was out there, cold-eyed, unsentimental, and threatening to move downtown. I called my accountant, who explained to me (as carefully as he had explained to me only a few years earlier that it made more sense to rent than to buy) that it made more sense to buy than to rent.

So we prepared to move. We threw away whole pieces of our lives: the Care Bears, the wire shelving in the basement storage room, the boxes of bank statements, the posters we hung on the walls when we were young, the stereo speakers that no longer worked, the first computer we ever bought, the snowboard, the surfboard, the drum kit, the Portafiles full of documents relating to movies never made. Boxes of clothing went to charity. Boxes of books went to libraries in homeless shelters. We felt cleansed. We'd got back to basics. We'd been forced to confront what we had outgrown, what we would no longer need, who we were. We had taken stock. It was as if we had died but got to sort through our things; it was as if we'd been reborn and were now able to start accumulating things all over again.

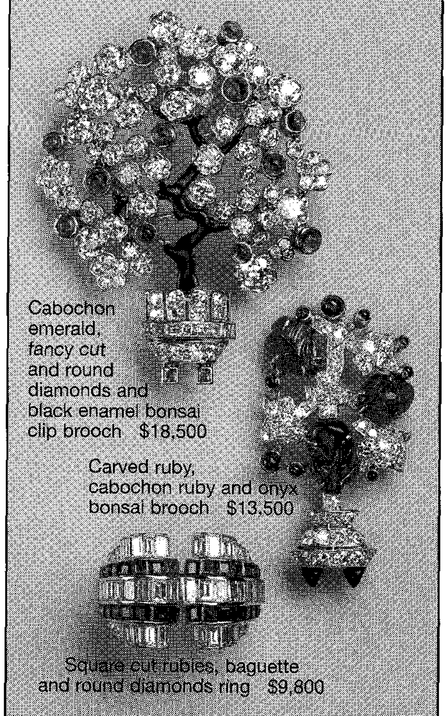
The new place was considerably smaller than the apartment in the Apthorp. It was on the Upper East Side, a neighborhood that on some level I had spent more than twenty years thinking of as the enemy of everything I held dear. It was nowhere near a Cuban-Chinese restaurant. But the fireplace worked, the doorman opened the door, and the Chinese food was delivered to your apartment. Within hours of moving in, I was at home. I was astonished. I was amazed. Most of all, I was mortified. I hadn't been so mortified since the end of my marriage, and a great many of the things that went through my head apropos of that marriage went through my head now: Why hadn't I left at the first whiff of the other woman's perfume? Why hadn't I realized how much of what I thought of as love was simply my own highly developed gift for making lemonade? What failure of imagination had caused me to forget that life was full of possibilities, including the possibility that eventually I would fall in love again?

On the other hand, I am never going to dream about this new apartment of mine.

At least, I haven't so far.

And I am never going to feel romantic about the neighborhood—although I have to say that it's much more appealing than I would have guessed. What's more, it turns out to possess many of the things that made the Apthorp so wildly attractive—proximity to an all-night newsstand, an all-night Korean grocery, and even a twenty-four-hour Kinko's. It's spring now, and I can see out the window that the pear trees are in bloom, and they're just beautiful. And, by the way, shopping for food is every bit as good on this side of town as it was on the West Side, it's much closer to the airport, the subway is better, and I'll tell you something else I've noticed about the East Side: it's sunnier, it really is, I don't know why, the light is just much lighter on the east side of town than the west. What's more, it's definitely warmer over here in winter, because it's farther from the frigid blasts of wind coming off the Hudson River. And it's much closer to all my doctors' offices, which is something you have to think about at my age, I'm sorry to say. A block from here is a place that sells the most heavenly Greek yogurt, and a block in another direction is a restaurant I could eat in every night, that's how good it is.

But it's not love. It's just where I live. ◆



Art Deco Jewelry
(platinum, c. 1925-1935)

Cabochon emerald, fancy cut and round diamonds and black enamel bonsai clip brooch $18,500

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ANNALS OF BROADCASTING

LIFE LESSONS

How soap operas can change the world.

BY HANNA ROSIN

One afternoon, in a small, hot conference room in San Miguel de Allende, a town in central Mexico, a dozen social workers were arguing about what should happen to Rocio, a sixteen-year-old girl. Rocio was the heroine of a radio soap-opera script they were writing, and, like all such heroines, she was destined to suffer. The story, so far, went like this: Rocio's mother, Apolonia, had come home from her job as a maid to find her nephew, Javier, sexually assaulting Rocio; she chased him away, but didn't take Rocio to the police station for months. The officers had no time for them—they were too busy flirting with each other. ("Hey, Marta, weren't you going to take me out to dinner?" one called to his secretary.) Rocio then endured an examination with an unsympathetic woman doctor who snapped her rubber gloves and rattled her speculum as if it were a sabre.

I'm desperate, mama.
Back then, we weren't always safe.
You scoundrel...

Telenovela characters endure countless calamities, but viewers' lives improve.

CENTER, COURTESY IRENE SABIDO; BOTTOM LEFT, AARON MONTGOMERY/JPI STUDIOS

"How about having Apolonia kill the nephew?" Marla Salcedo, a social worker with Fronteras Unidas Pro Salud, a health clinic in Tijuana, said. "Or maybe Rocio can commit suicide?" another woman suggested. The room, in the corner of a hacienda, had green-gray walls and was dominated by a big wooden table, strewn with laptops and legal pads. Ordinarily, it was used to train midwives, and a cabinet on one side held rows of preserved fetuses and anatomical models. Salcedo, who looks serious and kind, with warm brown eyes and long curly hair, next suggested having Rocio find out that she's pregnant. Rocio had been modelled on a girl Salcedo knew; most of the others in the meeting also worked at women's health agencies, and they had all encountered girls in similar situations. As a rule, they were in the business of offering treatment and comfort, not imagining fresh torments. But this week they were being trained in the art of the telenovela.

The workshop was organized by Population Communications International, a New York-based group that, for the past two decades, has pioneered the use of soap operas as a weapon against poverty. The workshop was in its final two days, and the participants had split into two groups, each charged with producing a five- to seven-minute radio drama. (The other group was working on a comedy about an accidental baby-switching in a maternity ward, to illustrate the indifference of Mexican hospitals; they made the nurse the jealous ex-lover of one of the fathers.) The social workers would then perform the scripts, which, if successful, would be produced and broadcast to as many as a million listeners.

The first "soap operas for social change," as these programs are loosely known, were developed by Miguel Sabido, a Mexican television producer, in the late seventies. Dramas produced according to the "Sabido method"—his formula for mapping out the characters' fates—have aired in a hundred countries, from Peru to Kenya and China. Some are large-scale television productions that cost up to a hundred and fifty thousand dollars per episode, with funding from U.S. AID or the United Nations, and some are seventy-five-dollar radio serials made by a local N.G.O. In 1992, a radio soap opera with a built-in AIDS-prevention message was produced in Tanzania with P.C.I.'s help. One region was cut off from the broadcast, and, after two years, researchers found that there were significant differences in condom use between that area and the rest of the country. Other studies have had similar results. Nevertheless, given the soap's reputation as the poor woman's recreational drug, the P.C.I. staff felt obliged to spend the first day of the workshop persuading health-care personnel to take the form seriously.

"If they sense that the program is 'educational,' they'll be gone in a second," Enriqueta Valdez Curiel, a P.C.I. consultant, said at a conference session. Let's say you want to make a show urging pregnant women to visit midwives. You write a story about Martha the midwife and the busy day she spends ministering to women in labor. That, Curiel said, is a public-service announcement. But give Martha a husband who wants her to quit her job, a daughter who accidentally becomes pregnant, or a village healer who attacks her—"Give her conflict and obstacles, lots of *giros,*" or twists of fate—and you have a soap opera.

"These are characters who constantly find obstacles to overcome, but they keep on trying," Curiel said.

"You mean like Hamlet?" one of the participants asked.

"*Exactamente!*"

In a typical soap opera, the heroine is subjected to an unfaithful husband, abduction, amnesia. She bears her fate bravely, but, to the dismay of feminist cultural critics, she waits for romance to redeem her and, too often, drifts back into a doomed marriage. In a Sabido soap, "you can't just punish, punish, punish the good ones," Curiel said, "or people will feel powerless to change."

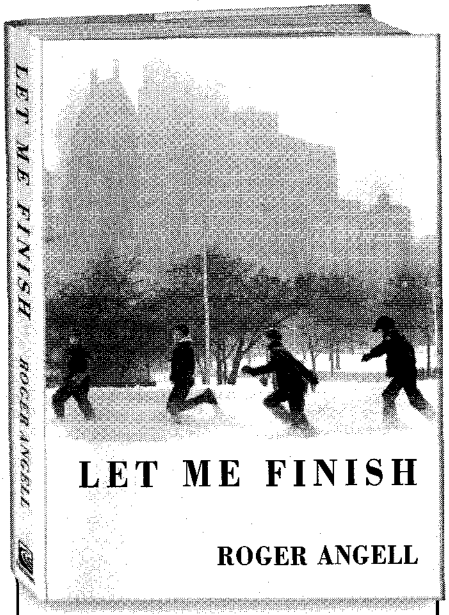
But you can't get rid of the love stories, either. The trick is to get a health message across while still producing a soap opera that anyone would want to watch—to integrate escapism and didacticism. Prenatal nutrition and oral-rehydration therapy are not the usual stuff of soap operas. But poverty has its own built-in *giros:* frustrated men, vulnerable women and children, and a very thin margin between stability and crisis. Developing nations are rich in melodrama, if one chooses to see them that way. In most of Mexico, for example, it's all but impossible for women to get legal abortions, which makes for countless instructive story lines involving unwanted pregnancies, hasty marriages, and adultery.

Late into the evening, Salcedo and her fellow social workers were still hard at work on Rocio's story in the dimly lit conference room. A tray in the center of the table held empty water bottles, coffee cups, and decomposing banana peels. One man rhythmically tapped a box of Marlboro Lights; another rested his head on the table. The confinement had a kind of Stanford Prison Experiment effect, as the participants vented their frustrations on Rocio. She could get a venereal disease, someone said. ("No, not that!" said the woman who had been selected to play Rocio.) The man with the Marlboros said, "Maybe she could become a militant lesbian," and everyone laughed. Someone else suggested that the gynecologist could be a sadist—with an unfaithful husband.

Five or six hours later, Curiel came in to check on the group's progress. "I think she's suffered enough," she said, after listening for a few minutes. "Remember, she's supposed to get rewarded in the end." With that reminder, Rocio's fortunes suddenly shifted. At the end of the script, the narrator explained that Rocio "has become an activist for the rights of migrant women, and has managed to resolve many cases like her own." Javier, the rapist cousin, winds up in jail.

On the third day of the conference, I had dinner with Miguel Sabido and his sister Irene. Sabido is a trim, well-tailored man, with a carefully clipped mustache. The effect was marred somewhat when he abruptly got up from the table, put his hands to his lower abdomen, and issued a loud series of shrieks. He was making a point about Janet Leigh in the shower scene of "Psycho"; she concentrated her energy in the pit of her stomach, he said, thus appealing to the viewer's "reptilian brain"—the part that is ritualistic, paranoid, and repeats mistakes over and over. In his telenovelas, Sabido said, he wanted to reach the limbic brain, which governs emotions. This is Sabido's adaptation of the "triune brain theory," which he picked up in the nineteen-seventies during a visit to the neurologist Paul MacLean, who was then at the National Institute of Mental Health—one of many stops in his quest to perfect his telenovelas. "It is not enough just to change people's attitudes," Sabido said. "You have to change how they behave."

One of Sabido's favorite experts is the psychologist Albert Bandura, of Stanford University, whom he described as "the greatest American since Benjamin Franklin." Bandura's "Bobo doll studies," conducted in the late nineteen-



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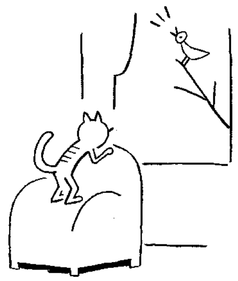
fifties and the sixties, showed that children, observing adults in violent forms of play, mimicked those behaviors. The best way to teach new behaviors, Bandura found, was to give people models that they could bond with and who could guide them through concrete, realistic steps. Sabido visited Bandura at Stanford to discuss plot ideas.

In a Sabido soap opera, there is always one positive, aspirational character, usually someone whose social status is slightly higher than that of the typical viewer. At the other end of the spectrum is a negative character—a superstitious mother-in-law or a thuggish husband. The most important member of the cast is the "transitional" figure—the fallible character who struggles to behave decently. This is the person with whom the audience is meant to identify.



"A typical soap opera reflects the values of the culture and rarely stops to question them," Alice Payne Merritt, the deputy director of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Communication Programs, told me. "The women are generally passive and follow the leads of the men. They rarely step out of their expected roles to become agents of change." Characters in Sabido soaps who act in ways that international aid workers consider beneficial—who, say, don't ostracize a cousin because he has AIDS—often have a hard time at first, but in the end they triumph. The assumption—perhaps an optimistic one—is that viewers, even those facing extreme economic and social disadvantages, can gain much more control over their lives if they are shown how to go about it.

Telenovelas are, in some ways, the ideal vehicle for such messages. Unlike soap operas in the United States, they are aired during prime time and are not considered the sole province of housewives. An American soap opera follows a vortex structure, with a few central characters and several story lines swirling around them, and is meant to continue indefinitely. A telenovela has one main plot, with a principal heroine, and four or five subplots that move toward a conclusion within six months to a year.

In Sabido soaps, like most programs in the genre, high dramas are staged in mundane settings. In "Bai Xing" ("Ordinary People"), Luye, an unmarried rural Chinese girl, has a baby and moves to the city. In the third season of the show, which is now airing in China, two characters learn that they have AIDS. (This is almost unheard of on Chinese television.) "Tsha Tsha," a 2003 South African soap, is a sort of "Dirty Dancing" set in a fictional village. Viwe is a haughty, spoiled rich girl who steals her rival's dance partner, Andile. Just before the final round of a big dance contest, she finds out that she was infected with H.I.V. by a former boyfriend, and tells Andile, "You should find another partner. I'm gonna stop dancing."

He answers, "It is hard, but life goes on. You're healthy and fit, and you can dance. And this competition means a lot to me."

Sabido grew up within a circle of post-revolutionary Mexican artists and intellectuals. His mother was an actress and a teacher, and his father was an indigenous Indian activist. In the nineteen-sixties, Sabido, who was in his twenties, began writing plays, including retellings of Mexican folk stories. He is prone to spontaneous declarations of enthusiasm or love—for his mentors, for P.C.I. staff, for the waiters at a restaurant. ("The telenovela is one of the most amazing phenomena in communication in the history of mankind," he said at one point.)

In 1961, Sabido became interested in television—a medium that was then considered a "low genre" by Mexican intellectuals—and began writing for telenovelas. The day-to-day pace was gruelling. "There was a cliffhanger before every commercial," Sabido said. One of his early telenovelas, "Las Momias de Guanajuato," involved a group of travellers, some mummies, and the secrets in their past. It was terrible, he said, but it became a hit.

In 1967, Sabido wrote a series of four telenovelas about Benito Juárez, the only Mexican President who was a full-blooded Indian. That same year, one of the most popular telenovelas of all time, "Simplemente Maria," was airing in Peru. It follows two decades in the life of a maid as she struggles with the demands of being a single mother and pursuing a career; ultimately, she becomes a famous fashion designer. In the background is a twenty-year unresolved romance with her former literacy teacher, whom she finally marries. On the day that her wedding was to be filmed, the church was so mobbed with fans that the camera crew couldn't get in. That episode garnered higher ratings than the final game of the World Cup.

Peru's working-class women identified deeply with Maria; they saw her story less as a Cinderella fantasy than as a future that was possible for them, too. Thousands of maids wrote to the station to say that they were going back to school. The social impact of the show was accidental, but it gave Sabido, and others, a glimpse of the telenovela's potential.

In 1974, Emilio Azcárraga, the president of Televisa, Mexico's main station, hired Sabido to produce socially responsible programming. Sabido proposed writing a regular telenovela and then "hijacking" one of the subplots. Azcárraga agreed. "But if you take away one point of the ratings I will kill you," Sabido recalled his saying. As Sabido walked out, Azcárraga shouted, "Commercial! Commercial! Commercial!"

For this telenovela, called "Ven Conmigo" ("Come with Me"), instead of the usual blond, blue-eyed leading ladies, Sabido chose actresses who were dark-haired and spoke with working-class accents. Its main plot centers on Barbara, a teacher from a working-class family, and Jorge, the wealthy man who loves her. Sabido's subplot involved some of Barbara's adult students, including a carpenter, a maid, a single mother who works on a farm, and an ex-con. Posters from the Ministry of Public Education's actual literacy campaign hung in the classroom. In the first episode, an older man sits outside Barbara's classroom without introducing himself. When she finally notices him and asks why he's there, he admits that he is embarrassed, because his grandchildren have finished primary school and he hasn't.

The ratings for this series were higher than for any of Televisa's previous telenovelas. In one episode, Barbara's students visit the headquarters of the government's literacy program to pick up free booklets. The following day, more than twelve thousand people converged on the actual headquarters, creating a traffic jam that lasted until after midnight. Close to a million new students signed up for literacy classes.

Sabido's next telenovela, "Accompáñame" ("Come Along"), addressed family planning. Before it aired, Sabido went to the archbishop of Mexico with a list of the positive values that he intended to promote, including the importance of taking responsibility for children, and the archbishop agreed to endorse the program. "Accompáñame" portrays three sisters in a lower-class Mexico City family. One sister has a healthy, happy marriage. Another has an unwanted pregnancy. The transitional character, Martha, has three children and is fearful of another pregnancy. In one scene, a baby is crying, a pot is boiling over, the phone is ringing, and her six-year-old walks in. Martha is about to slap the child, then recoils, saying, "I don't want to be like my mother." During the following weeks, she and her husband visit family-planning clinics. Martha tapes up a calendar marking the days that they can have sex, which she refers to as "the days we can go to the dance." She is rewarded with a husband who is seen as both relaxed and affectionate as he rubs his foot against her leg. The year that "Accompáñame" aired, sales of over-the-counter contraceptives in Mexico increased twenty-three per cent.

In 1983, Sabido made his first attempt to export his method. He travelled to India with David Poindexter, who was working at the Population Institute, a nonprofit organization that focusses on family planning. (The following year, Poindexter founded the program that would become P.C.I.) The two met with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and the Indian health minister. When Sabido asked the health minister what proportion of India's population had access to contraceptives, he answered, "A hundred per cent." As the meeting ended, Sabido told me, Mrs. Gandhi took him aside and said of her minister, "That man is a liar!" She then approved a Sabido-method telenovela for a state-run network.

The show, "Hum Log" ("We People"), which went on the air in 1984, became one of the most popular dramas in Indian history. It followed the Rams, a lower-middle-class family, for three generations. At first, viewers complained that the scripts tended to sermonize and the acting was pedestrian, so the writers added subplots involving gangsters. Arvind Singhal, a professor of communication studies at Ohio University, was in India in the summer of 1985, visiting his family. "Lunch, dinner—it was all anyone talked about," he said of the show. "This is a slight exaggeration, but you can divide India's media history between its pre-'Hum Log' and its post-'Hum Log' state. People talked about things they'd never talked about before," such as the expectation that a bride would bring a dowry for her husband's family. "Symbolically, this represented the opening of India," he said.

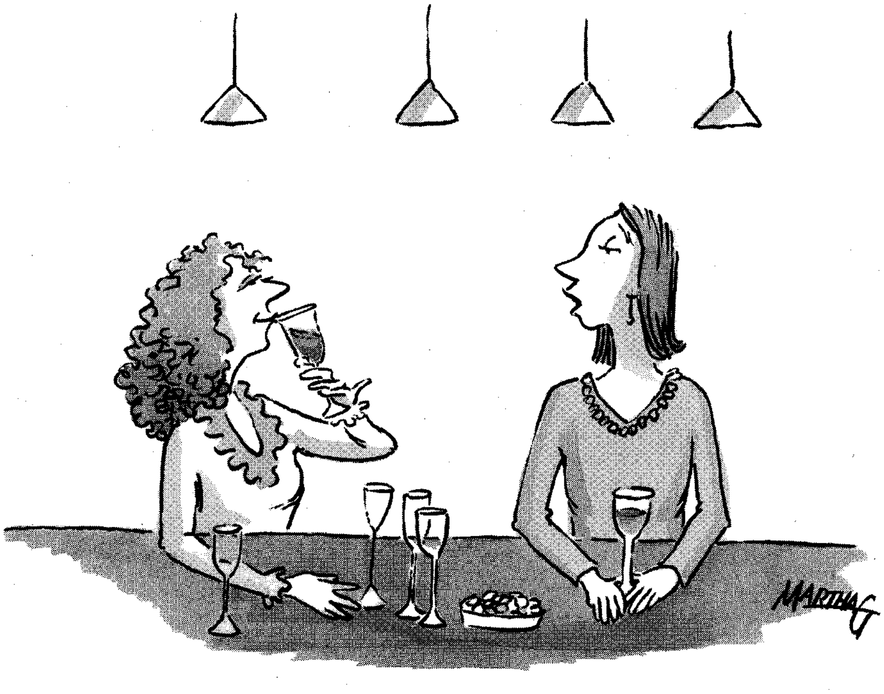
In 1996, Singhal conducted a study of an Indian radio drama that P.C.I. helped produce, "Tinka Tinka Sukh" ("Happiness Lies in Small Pleasures"). "Tinka Tinka Sukh" is set in Navgaon, or "new village." Its heroine is Champa, a village girl, with a drug addict for a brother, who becomes a famous singer. A few months after Singhal began the research project, a poster-size letter arrived at the offices of All India Radio. It was signed by Birendra Singh Khushwaha, a tailor in Lutsaan, a small village in the state of Uttar Pradesh. "For the past ten years I had lost my way, but 'Tinka Tinka Sukh' showed me a new path of life," the letter said:

> I used to be delinquent, aimless, and a bully. I harassed girls.... After listening to the drama, my life underwent a change.... All my other drawbacks and negative values were transformed.

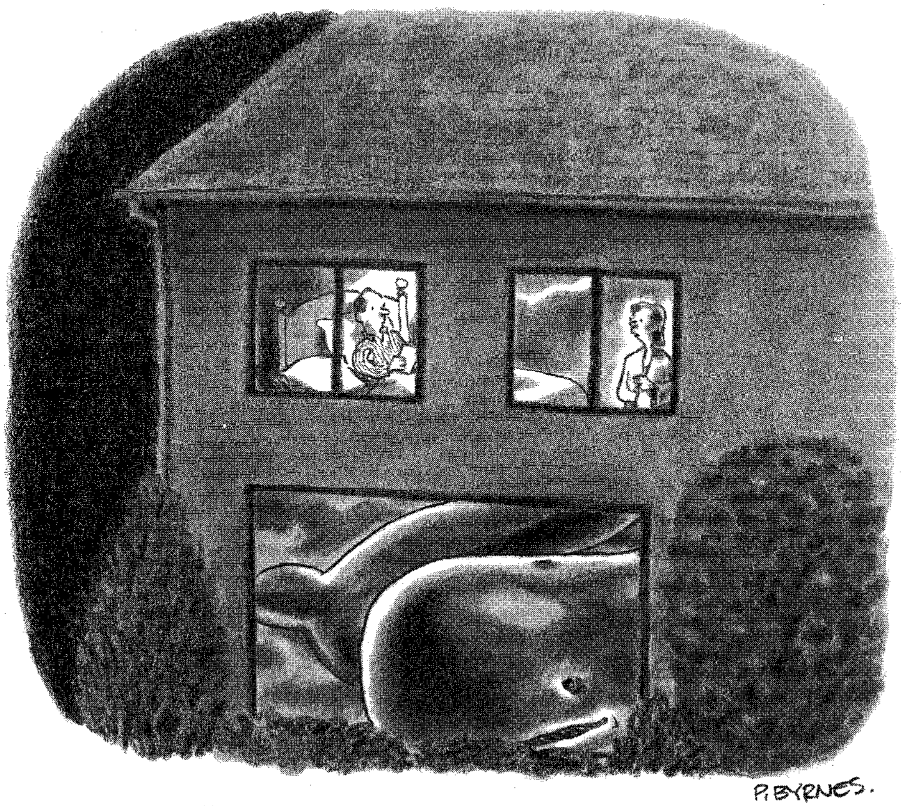
A hundred and eighty-three villagers had added their signatures or thumbprints. The radio crew, suspicious that the letter might be a hoax, sent it to Singhal, and in the summer of 1997 he went in search of the tailor.

There were a thousand homes in Lutsaan, with sixty radios and five television sets. Two roads ran through it, and the tailor's shop was near the intersection. He was the only tailor, so everyone came by—upper and lower caste, Hindu and Muslim. He was also an obsessive fan of the show, and villagers gathered in his shop to listen to it.

The villagers told Singhal that, as the plot unfolded, they realized that Lutsaan shared some of the bad qualities of the fictional Navgaon. In one subplot, Poonam, a young bride, is beaten by her in-laws, who are not satisfied with her dowry. They falsely accuse her of cheating on her husband, and send her home to her parents in disgrace; she commits suicide. The story line was widely discussed in Lutsaan, and when the village postmaster's son got married, soon afterward, he refused to take a dowry; other men



"By the way, the health benefits of a glass of wine a day are not retroactive."



"Either you left the TV on downstairs or we have whales again."

• •

in the village pledged to do the same.

In another subplot, Lali, the daughter of a widow, fights to go to school and eventually becomes a doctor. On his first research visit, Singhal met a seven-year-old girl who, by coincidence, was also named Lali. Her two older brothers went to school, but Lali had to stay home to take care of her younger brothers. Six months later, Singhal returned to find Lali sitting in a classroom. The villagers had petitioned the government for funds for a child-care center so that girls would not have to babysit their siblings at the expense of attending school. The percentage of girls at the school had risen from ten to forty.

"It was so wonderfully gratifying," Singhal said. "It took some period of time, and then the magic began. The conversations led to certain decisions, the decisions led to certain actions. This is what we hope for."

Soap operas for social change aren't political by design. But often they air topics that governments would rather avoid. At the P.C.I. conference in Washington, Karen Merkel, of the BBC World Service Trust, talked about a show that was being broadcast in Burma illicitly on shortwave radio, "Thabyegone Ywa," or "Eugenia Tree Village." Some of the actors were Burmese exiles who worked on a BBC set in Thailand. One character is a city doctor who moves to a remote village, and much of the plot focusses on basic health issues, but it also deals with economic and civic development. Burma's military junta has made it a treasonable offense to listen to the show. Still, when the BBC ran a contest for a love poem that one of the characters could read on the air, hundreds of people responded.

The model character in a new serial emerges much like a political candidate; researchers conduct field studies to find out whom viewers might trust, and then use polls to test various story lines. In 2000, the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs decided to sponsor a soap opera in Nepal. Taboos about maternal blood discourage anyone from touching a woman who's in labor, and most rural women deliver their babies alone; the country has one of the highest infant-death rates in the world. Diane Summers, who heads the Johns Hopkins program in Nepal, told me that researchers realized that the women by themselves had little power to change their circumstances; in order to be effective, she said, a show had to be pitched to their husbands and their mothers-in-law.

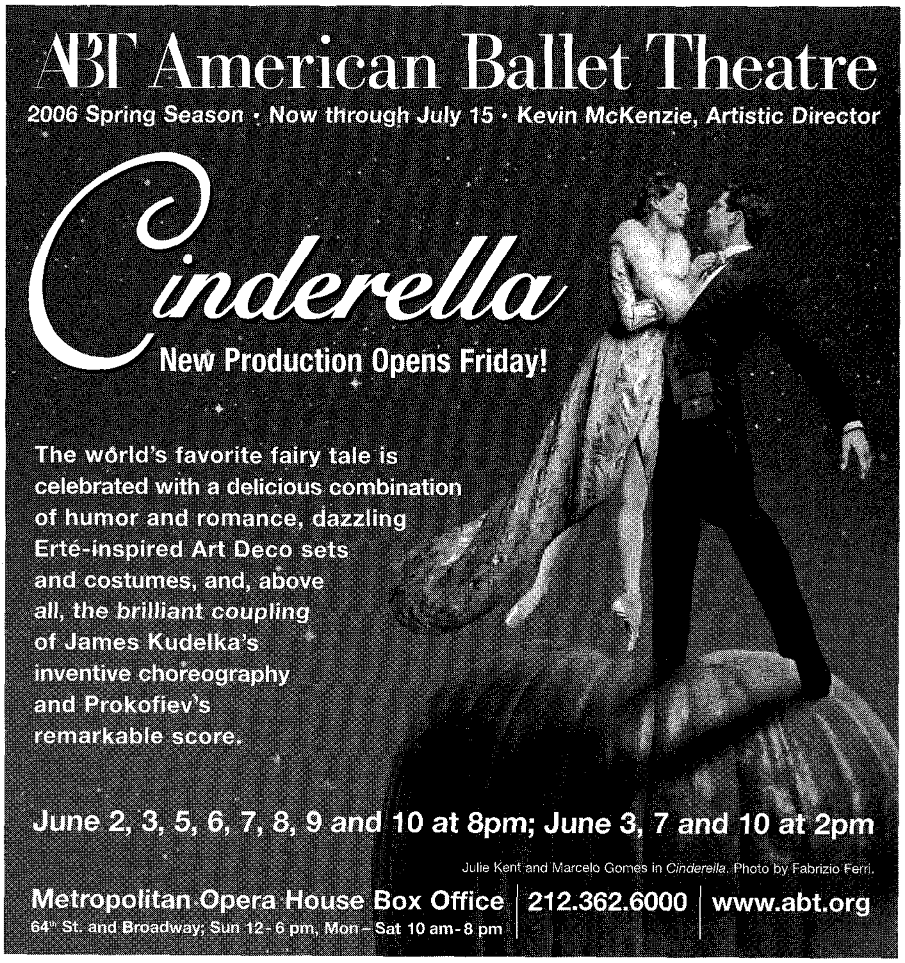
Summers hired a comedy duo who were popular with rural men, and they wrote and starred in "Asal Logne" ("Good Husband"). The first episode of the show opens with a frantic search for a young man named Birkhe; his sister is getting married, and he is needed to give her away. It turns out that he's off drinking and gambling, as usual. Birkhe is good-hearted but useless; he loves his wife but does nothing to protect her from his mother, who works her like a mule, causing her to have a miscarriage. The plot centers on his transformation. Before long, Birkhe develops liver disease and goes to see the village doctor; in a scene of high comedy, he declares that he is giving up drinking and offers a bottle of liquor to the gods. When Birkhe's wife, pregnant again, finally goes into labor, he runs into the house, where there are sounds of banging and kicking—as if she were being beaten. A neighbor, alarmed, rushes in, and finds Birkhe desperately trying to open a metal box, in which he has stored the money that will allow his wife to give birth at the local health clinic.

The most widely viewed program in the world is not a telenovela but "The Bold and the Beautiful," a CBS soap opera set in rival fashion houses. It is broadcast in a hundred and thirty-four countries, including Bangladesh, Uganda, and Yemen. In 2001, in a major twist, Tony, a young designer, told Kristen, his girlfriend, that he was H.I.V.-positive. The writers had consulted with experts from the Centers for Disease Control, and provided an 800 number that people could call for more information. After one particularly emotional scene, the line received five thousand calls. (Kristen marries Tony, and after honeymooning in Africa they adopt an AIDS orphan.) A study in Botswana, where the show is also aired, found that it had a significant effect on people's attitudes toward AIDS.

The effort to get this kind of story line on "The Bold and the Beautiful" and other American soaps was spearheaded by Sonny Fox, who became the chairman of the board at P.C.I. in 1992. Fox had been the host of the children's show "Wonderama," and first met Sabido at a television conference in the late sixties. In 1993, Fox began organizing what he called annual "soap summits," inviting only people who controlled content: executive producers, head writers, and network executives. His keynote speaker the second year was Donna Shalala, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, who talked about soap operas and their ability to reach people in ways that perhaps the government never could. "Nobody ever talked to soap-opera people that way," Fox said. "They had to sit up straighter and take themselves more seriously."

Sonny Fox is now thinking beyond poverty reduction, to broader social and cultural issues, including anti-Americanism. He quoted Karen Hughes, who, at her confirmation hearing to become the Under-Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, talked about the "powerful impressions" created by the music and film industries. Many N.G.O. workers, however, are reluctant to participate in what they see as an American propaganda effort. Maternal health and infant nutrition are goals that everyone can agree on. Even when N.G.O.s address birth control, they tend to be fairly conservative, pushing against the limits of what is culturally acceptable in a given country but being careful not to stray too far beyond those boundaries. The war on terror is a different matter.

Fox is already circulating a treatment that he has shared with Al Hura, an American-run network that broadcasts in Arabic, and with Hughes's office. It is designed to appeal primarily to men and women in the Middle East between the ages of sixteen and thirty-five. The setting is a hospital populated by doctors and patients from all over the Arab world. The main character grew up in the Middle East but left twenty years ago to study medicine in the United States. His Americanized ways and values bring him into conflict with everyone he meets. Fox thinks that a story like this could do some good, provided, he said, that "we can keep the American fingerprints off it." ♦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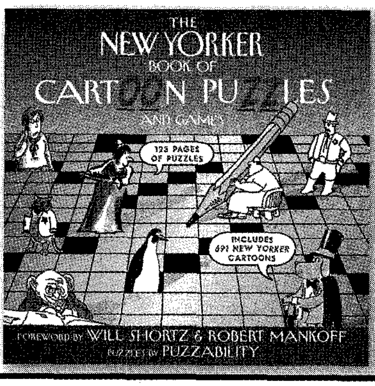

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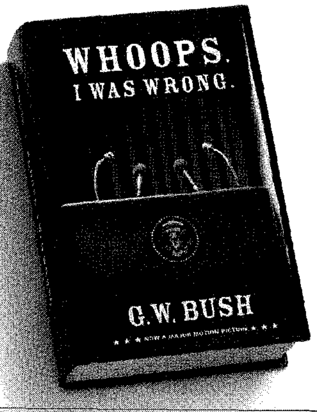

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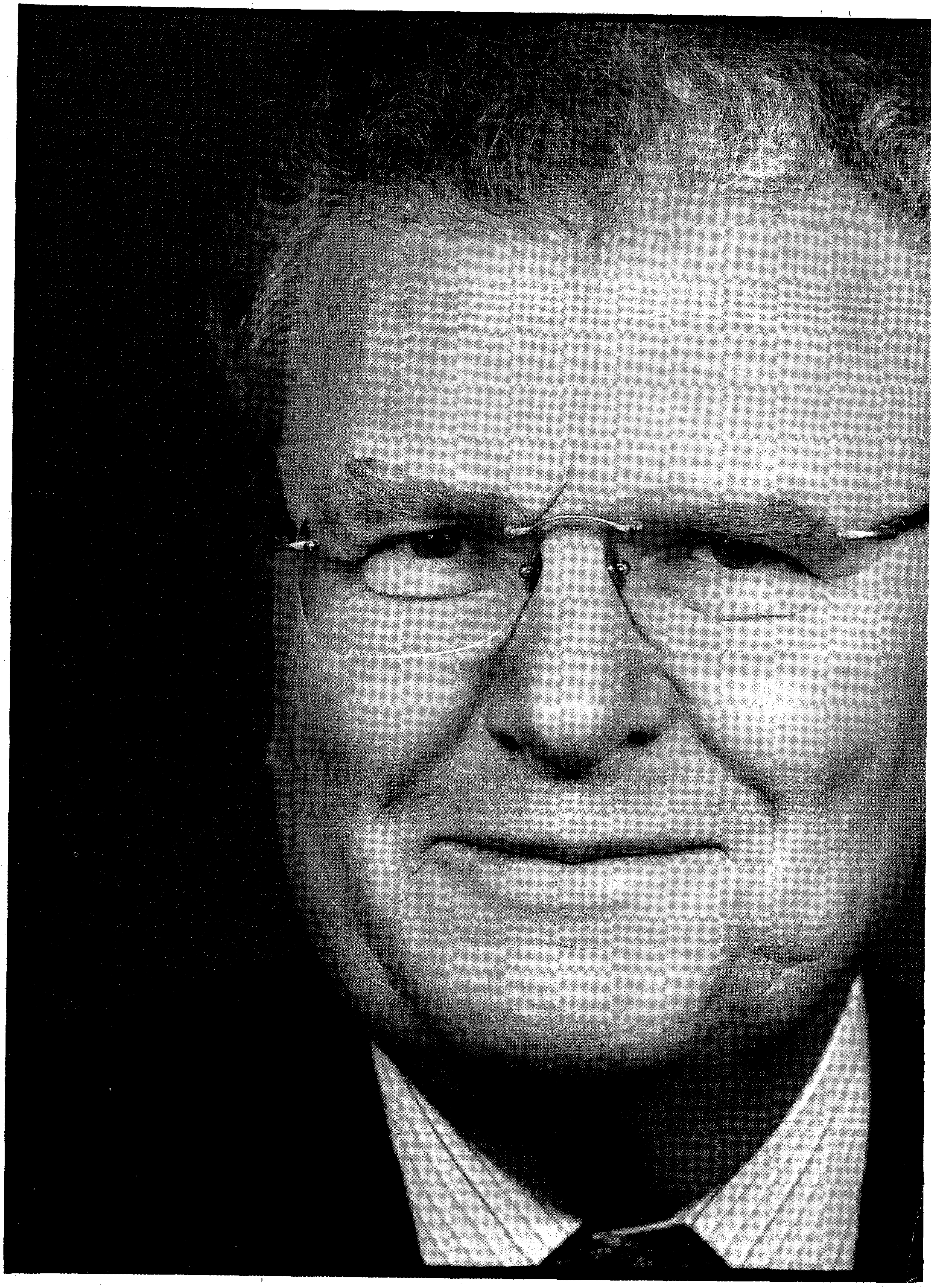

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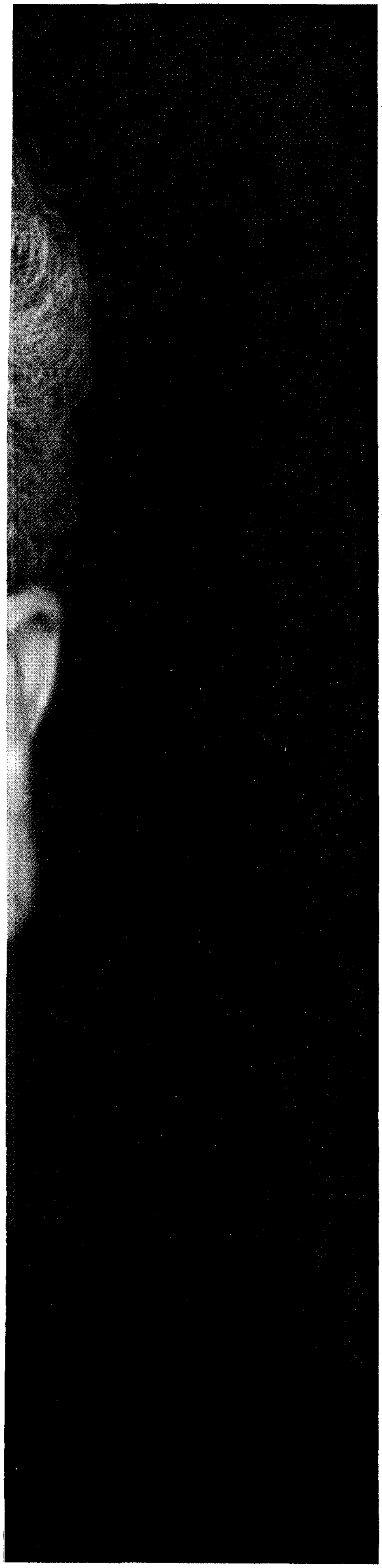


PROFILES

STRINGER'S WAY

Can Sony's British C.E.O. save an ailing brand?

BY MARK SINGER

In an era of brazen executive overcompensation, Sir Howard Stringer, the chairman and chief executive of Sony Corporation, does all right for himself yet manages to lag tastefully behind most other C.E.O.s. So it appears, anyway. The tradition of lifetime employment in Japan has kept salaries there relatively modest, and perquisites like stock options, an American commonplace, are rare. Japanese securities laws do not require even a fine-print public disclosure of what the bosses take home, and Stringer, who has impeccable social skills, isn't blabbing.

He's less reticent about discussing his frequent-flier mileage balance, which presumably exceeds that of his peers. Sony owns three corporate jets, but, as often as not, Stringer flies commercial (which is not to say in the coach cabin). During a two-month sequence last fall, he spent a week in New York, four days in Tokyo, five in England, two in Boston, a day in Toronto, a day in New York, two in Beijing, one in Shanghai, two in New Delhi, two in Bombay, four in Tokyo, four in Los Angeles, one in San Jose, five in New York, three in L.A., three in New York, a week and a half in Tokyo, and the Thanksgiving holiday in England, after which he returned to New York. Total miles: 60,000. This has been his pace for more than a year, since the word went out, in March, 2005, that he would assume the top job at Sony, a development that greatly surprised the Asian and Western business press, and, for that matter, Stringer himself. Not all his friends (a global circle) were convinced that this was the best thing that could happen to him. He was sixty-three, and he had already enjoyed successful careers in journalism and the entertainment industry; money wasn't an issue; and he had a wife and two young children whom he wouldn't get to see much anymore. (Now, in his perpetually jet-lag-addled geography, a reasonable question would be: Where *is* home?)

One afternoon last fall, I met with Stringer in a corner office on the sixth floor of a nondescript modern eight-story building in Tokyo's Shinagawa ward, a residential and commercial area where one of Sony's first factories was built, almost sixty years ago. Nothing about the office décor—gray carpeting, black Aeron chairs, yucca palm, tchotchke-free desk, framed posters promoting Sony's online music service—revealed anything about the occupant. A glass wall made Stringer visible to an adjacent roomful of accountants and financial planners, and the door, I gathered, was usually open.

Our conversation took place only days before "Memoirs of a Geisha," Sony Pictures Entertainment's pull-out-the-stops holiday-season release, was to have splashy premières in, consecutively, Tokyo, Los Angeles, and New York. (The film was a critical and financial disappointment.) Privately, a few of Sony Corporation's Japanese senior executives had expressed disbelief that a Hollywood studio—no matter who owned it—could get the cultural details of the story right. That Chinese actors had been cast in several starring roles didn't arouse confidence, either.

A naturalized U.S. citizen, Stringer was born in Wales. "I told the executives, 'No, you'll find flaws in it, it's a Western interpretation. But it has value, because the world is flat,' " he said to me. "I grew up seeing American actors play Robin Hood or Ivanhoe or Rob Roy. When John Ford made 'How Green Was My Valley,' the actors were not Welsh." In what passes for Stringer-style heavy-handedness, he'd insisted

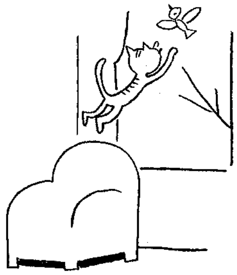
Howard Stringer must maneuver Sony through a universe of unpredictable and uncontrollable variables. Photograph by Martin Schoeller.

that some of the doubters attend the Los Angeles gala.

"I've told them, 'Come on, we're all one company,'" he said. "They'll be on the red carpet, and we've agreed that, if the press asks, they have to say they like the picture."

A close friend of Stringer's, the novelist Avery Corman, said recently, "Howard's a guy who wears his business success very easily. He's not a person who will suck the air out of the room. I've watched a lot of sports with him. We're both longstanding—I mean long-suffering—New York Giants fans. I believe that Howard is among those people who understand that things can always go wrong and will. I assume he approaches business with the same bemused, wry skepticism."

In the mid-seventies, when Stringer was producing documentaries for CBS—he spent thirty years at the network—he began collecting first-edition British and American fiction. I asked Otto Penzler, a New York bookseller who caters to his fondness for mysteries and espionage thrillers, whether Stringer reminded him of any figure in literature. "He's not unlike George Smiley," Penzler said, referring to John le Carré's leading protagonist. "Very intelligent, self-effacing. But warmer than Smiley. Howard tells funny, usually self-deprecating stories. You can see his pleasure in the fun of fun. He's definitely more fun than Smiley." Nor is there a physical resemblance. According to le Carré, Smiley is "short, fat, and of quiet disposition." Stringer is long-limbed (if less trim than he was as a collegiate rugby player). At six-three, he must have moments, not necessarily comforting, when he feels like the tallest man in Japan. He's an elegant, subdued dresser: basic Turnbull & Asser. His curly blond hair has mostly gone gray, and he has light-blue eyes behind rimless glasses, broad pink cheeks, and the at-ease demeanor of, say, a commercial pilot or a trusts-and-estates attorney.



By that point in mid-autumn, Stringer was setting in motion a strategy for transforming Sony. Historically one of the world's most successful brands, Sony had lost its dominance in recent years, and now had to contend not only with the likes of Apple, Samsung, Toshiba, Panasonic, and Microsoft but also with hordes of more agile and avid technology entrepreneurs, all maneuvering in an ever-accelerating universe of unpredictable and uncontrollable variables. Stringer's three-year master plan, which he and other senior executives had spent the summer devising, had to be at once resolute and politically delicate.

"There's a real divergence between Japanese expectations and Western expectations of what a transformation should accomplish," Stringer said. "And I knew I was going to be trapped between those two."

Japanese securities analysts and the Japanese press took the view that Sony needed to grow rather than close factories and fire employees; morale was simply too fragile. The equally simplistic Western attitude was that a successful reorganization was best measured in terms of dead bodies. The blueprint that emerged called for lowering operating costs by doing away with redundant and unprofitable product lines (eliminating ten thousand jobs and closing eleven factories); centralizing marketing and corporate functions; improving communication and defusing rivalries among the company's various divisions; and, not least, inspiring and motivating Sony's most valuable human resource—its engineers—by reiterating that consumer electronics is the heart of its enterprise. At Sony Corporation of America, where Stringer had been chief executive since 1997, he had taken a not very well integrated group of businesses (including profligacy-prone movie and music divisions) and molded it into a more harmonious, responsive-to-Tokyo, and profitable subsidiary. Overhauling all of Sony, however, was a far more formidable task.

Masaru Ibuka, a co-founder of Sony, liked to say, "If you want innovation, you have to come up with something completely off the wall." In 1950, four years after Sony's beginnings as the manufacturer of an electric rice cooker, the company introduced the first magnetic tape recorder. Five years later came the transistor radio; five years after that, the world's first all-transistor TV set; in 1971, the first color videocassette recorder; and, in 1979, the Walkman portable stereo. The Walkman, along with the Trinitron television, exemplified the Sony brand, and while they thrived—well into the eighties—Sony seemed to own the future. Now the company was considered a laggard, and its hundred and sixty thousand employees lacked focus. The question, for them, was no less than "What, exactly, are we here to do?"

In June of 2005, Stringer's appointment was formally approved at a shareholders' meeting. From there, he gave himself a hundred days to initiate "some real and symbolic transformation of the company." Simultaneously with Stringer's ascension, Ryoji Chubachi, one of the company's top engineers, was named president of Sony Corporation, with over-all responsibility for electronics. Though Stringer had not known Chubachi before, he immediately embraced him as an equal partner. One weekend, Chubachi and his wife invited Stringer to join them at a traditional country inn outside Tokyo. The locale mattered to Chubachi, because he wanted to convey the importance that he placed upon *wabi sabi*, a Japanese expression of a specific aesthetic and existential awareness. (*Wabi* means "less is more," more or less; *sabi* has been defined as "attentive melancholy.") "Japanese try hard to make things simple," Chubachi said during a conversation in Los Angeles last December. "We love simple food, simple design. With Howard, we visited a Japanese garden, we visited a water mill, we enjoyed a lake view. I explained why we love such things." In a discussion of "Geisha," he recalled, he and Stringer "touched upon how the real Japanese culture can be understood only by Japanese. Howard said, 'I don't think so.' He also said to me, 'I've never had such a relaxed time.'"

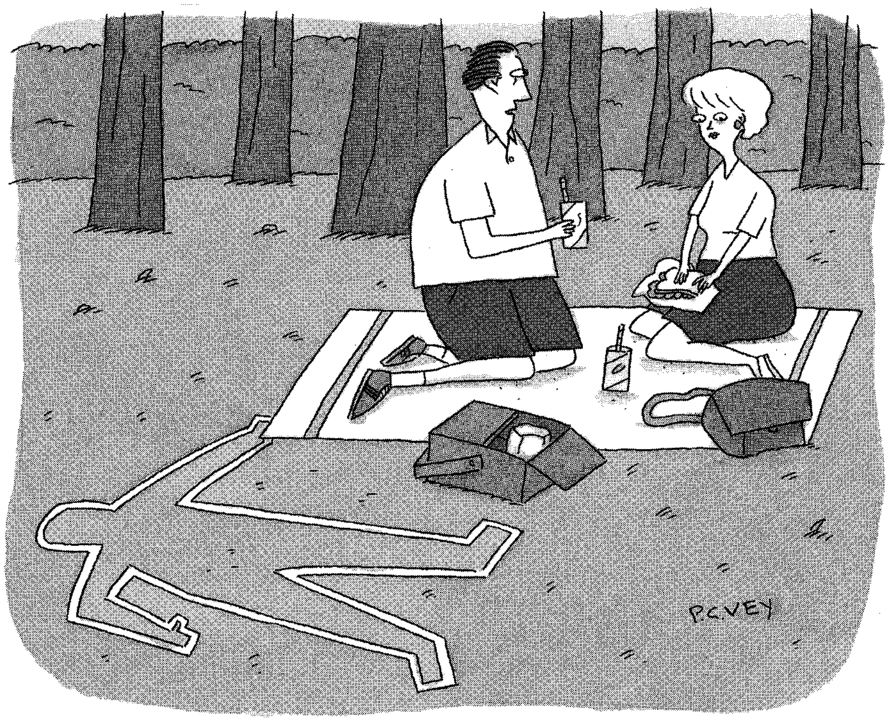
I asked Chubachi, a slender, self-assured man in his late fifties, whether they had discussed their personal histories. "I don't need to ask Howard about his personal history," he replied. "I totally understand what he experienced. I guessed that he can guess what I experienced. Looking is believing. We understand each other, I'm sure."

Because Stringer's father, Harry, was a career officer in the Royal Air Force, he grew up all over England. (His mother, Marjorie, was a teacher.) During one seven-year span, he attended six schools, usually on scholarship. At Oxford, he read history. His conversations with Chubachi and others at Sony, he told me, were "almost like an Oxford debate." He continued, "We talked about American values versus Eastern values. First, Chubachi and I, then with his staff, and gradually with more and more senior executives. We had a philosophical debate before we had a practical one. It raised questions about the nature of the way American business is done. I felt I had to convince Chubachi-san that I didn't have an American sledgehammer, that we wouldn't dispose of people as if they were disposable."

He went on, "Chubachi and I agreed: 'Whatever we do, we're going to do this together. This is not a top-down assault; this is a shared experience that you and I are going to have. And we will argue the merits of layoffs or closing companies or closing factories. We in the West will put together a plan for profitability, and you do the same thing, and we'll reach a synthesis of how we can go about this.' "

Concurrently, "as a bit of a throwback exercise"—as if he were preparing a scholastic paper—Stringer began reading "everything I could about management and transformation." His syllabus included Louis Gerstner's "Who Says Elephants Can't Dance?," about I.B.M.; Jack Welch's "Winning"; and "Shift," by Carlos Ghosn, another Westerner (Brazilian) who is the chief executive of an iconic Japanese industrial firm (Nissan). He digested many of the books written about Sony, among them "Made in Japan," by Akio Morita—the other founder of the company, and one of the twentieth century's true marketing wizards. Stringer talked with management consultants, and he sought advice from other C.E.O.s—Gerstner, Welch, Michael Dell. Because the essential Stringer style evinces diplomatic finesse rather than alpha-male dominance, he presumably ignored the more aggressive suggestions.

Rex Adams, a former dean of the Fuqua School of Business, at Duke University, and a friend of Stringer's since the early sixties (when Adams was at Oxford, as a Rhodes Scholar), had often invited him to speak with M.B.A. candidates. Eventually, Stringer did, but only after repeatedly putting Adams off. "I finally said, 'What's the problem, Howard?' " Adams recalled. "He said, 'The problem is it's a business school. Somebody might ask me a business question.' "



"This is fun. Too bad about Frank."

Stringer told me, "I'm very happy to delegate. Unlike many executives, I really do rely upon people who know a lot more than I do. I'm very careful to surround myself with people who fill in a lot of the blanks. I didn't go to school in management. I never wanted to bloody well *be* a manager."

Still, it's not as if he had succeeded in spite of his shortcomings. Rather, Stringer seems a virtuoso of stealth ambition, the serial achiever who, if he weren't so affable, would be annoying because he rarely appears to exert himself. As a schoolboy living in East Anglia ("not the most sophisticated part of England"), Stringer was short, skinny, at the head of the class, and the teacher's pet. He was also a favorite target of the resident bullies ("I wasn't beaten up—just tortured"). It finally got bad enough that he quietly signed up for boxing lessons. One day, when his back was turned and a crowd was present, one of the bullies jabbed his neck with a pencil. Stringer whirled and slugged him, and several older boys applauded. The following year, he moved to a new school. "I went there with a clean slate," he said. "There was no bullying allowed. I said, 'I've put that past behind me.' The work was easy for me the first year, the environment was relaxed. I just told myself I'm going to be friendly and open and have a good time from now on—and never again be a teacher's pet."

"Howard has more charm than a stadium full of people," the writer and filmmaker Peter Davis said. "He's clearly very shrewd, but he never seems to be being shrewd." Stringer's career at CBS proceeded along a smoothly ascending trajectory, from entry-level clerk to president of the network, with fifteen years spent along the way as a researcher, writer, and producer of documentaries and three years as president of CBS News. "Essentially, Howard is a creative individual," David Poltrack, the head of research at CBS, said. "He's not a numbers guy. He's uncomfortable with budgets and statistical information. He understands it, he doesn't get lost in it, but I don't think it's something he enjoys.

He wouldn't have a meeting with a lot of Wall Street analysts and say to himself afterward, 'I've got to have those people over for dinner.' ”

As Stringer and I spoke in his office, he removed from a drawer a beige spiral notebook, a journal that he kept during his self-administered tutorial. He opened it to a list of accomplishments at Sony Corporation of America that he attributed to institutional behavioral change; a parallel attitude adjustment was now necessary within the larger company. “I don't think it's a Japanese problem,” he said. “It's a corporate problem.” When I asked if I could look at the journal, he declined, explaining that it contained his remarks about recalcitrant Sony executives whose responses to his analyses and proposed solutions had been variants of “It's too late.”

Were they still at the company?

Lips pursed, he nodded and said, “Mm-hmm.”

Most likely, the pessimists had in mind Transformation 60, an earnest self-evaluation initiated three years ago by Nobuyuki Idei, Stringer's predecessor, in anticipation of Sony's sixtieth anniversary. Twenty thousand employees were cut from the payroll, yet Transformation 60 did little to improve profits. As once distinctive products, like televisions, became generic commodities, the Sony premium no longer seemed to matter. (“Sony? Samsung? Toshiba? What difference does it make?”) Whereas the electronics division had an operating profit of nearly two billion dollars in 2000, it lost more than a quarter of a billion dollars last year. Only with the recent introduction of the Bravia line of high-definition TVs, which have been praised for their color intensity, has the division, which accounts for sixty-seven per cent of Sony's revenues, begun to recover.

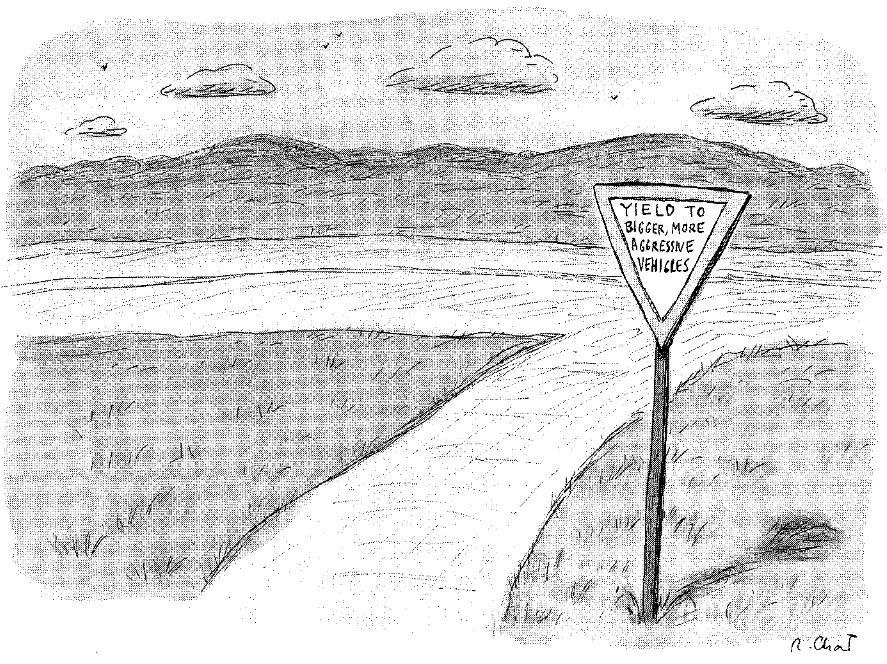
For a moment, Stringer paged through the notebook, then looked up. “The last time I truly knew what I was doing,” he said, “was when I was producing the 'CBS Evening News' ”—from 1981 to 1984—“because I felt in command of all aspects of the process. Even though it was very collaborative and people did things I couldn't do, I really felt I could bring everyone together to accomplish what we had in mind, to achieve the desired goal. I was very happy doing that job.”

He then drew a connection between his student days and his current situation. “When you're writing history essays—don't forget, the Oxford experience is all essays—the process is very much thesis, antithesis, synthesis. You see two sides to every question. It's a very good discipline for diminishing the ego. You see what happens to people: rise and fall. One of my tutors was Martin Gilbert, Churchill's biographer. I used to sit and read the correspondence of Churchill and so forth. That's good training for giving context to everything. It's humbling. Because you watch so many people who had it all and tossed it away.”

Sony has never stopped making well-designed and well-engineered electronics. But, as the global shift from analog to digital technology unfolded, its products had a basic flaw: they tended not to communicate with each other, or did so only with gratuitous difficulty. When Stringer joined Sony, in 1997, this state of affairs was reflected in the company's global organizational chart. Engineers worked in one “silo,” software designers in another. Different silos, supported by separate marketing teams, frequently spawned competing products. There was almost no connection between the American movies-and-music division and the Japanese electronics division.

In 1995, when Nobuyuki Idei became Sony's president, he began to speak of “digital dream kids,” the generation that would experience the “convergence” of hardware and proprietary content (music, movies, computer games, software). As Stringer put it, “Idei was almost too far ahead of his time in recognizing the inevitable transition to digital.” This hypothesis implies a dismaying irony. Recently, Stringer stood before a roomful of middle managers in Tokyo and, exaggerating for effect, said that an organization founded upon the virtue of innovation had become so decentralized—so not interconnected—that “if Morita-san showed up today, and you have a hundred and sixty thousand employees and a thousand products and you're pulled every which way, you have to search for half a dozen people who share the same philosophy.” Ironically or not, he added, “The hardest part of Sony is that it's very egalitarian.”

The most concise metaphor for what bedevils Sony is the Apple iPod, a world-changing device that has rapidly become the center of a vast network of interlinked products, from hardware (laptops, speaker systems, car stereos) to content (music, television shows, audiobooks). The iPod has even inspired a new form of digital programming: the podcast. For the citizens of Sony, the triumph of the iPod constitutes a distinct affront; one imagines the human-resources department dispensing voodoo-


YIELD TO BIGGER, MORE AGGRESSIVE VEHICLES
R. Chast

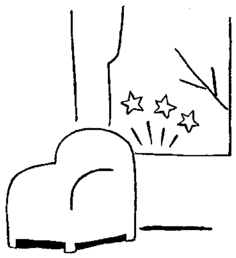
iPods and exorcism instruction manuals.

Stringer's approach has been to face the iPod dilemma squarely, and absorb whatever wisdom it provides. Promoting his restructuring campaign internally—with its imperative to concentrate upon "champion products" (high volume, healthy margins, juice for the brand)—he often says, "If Apple can create a company with a market cap of fifty billion dollars on the basis of a handful of products, and we do it on the basis of a thousand, aren't we then too much of a department store?" (As of mid-May, Apple's market capitalization stood at nearly fifty-four billion dollars, eight billion higher than Sony's.)

The deeper indignity of the iPod is that Apple clobbered Sony at its own game. The Sony Walkman had pioneered the concept of a portable personal music player. And, in what should have been an extremely lucrative coincidence, he who created the Walkman also controlled, via Sony Music, a wealth of exploitable content. But the company never managed to bring the two together. When Stringer inveighs against the silo system, the handiest case study is the Network Walkman, a digital music player that Sony developed more than two years before the advent of the iPod. In principle, it could do what an iPod does, but, because the engineers and the software developers apparently were never introduced, getting the music into the player was laughably cumbersome. Sony approached proprietary digital-rights management as if it were guarding nuclear secrets; Apple built a security-lite system that could download music from the Internet to a computer to an iPod so simply that your grandmother could get the hang of it while brewing tea. Above all—the killer application's ultimate weapon—the iPod looked amazing. As a result, Apple (all six products, Stringer might say) was reborn as the emblem of cool. By then, Sony decidedly was not.

When Michael Eisner, the former emperor of Disney and nouveau talk-show host, interviewed Stringer, not long ago, he asked, "How do you compete against the iPod? Do you make a better technology or do you make a better commercial?" Stringer responded with a rueful smile and said, "That's very clever."

The wishful answer, basically, is both. For the moment, Sony's most conspicuous better technology is PlayStation, the game-console-plus-now-much-more platform that appeared in 1994 and swiftly became Sony's most talked about and profitable franchise since the Walkman. No less meaningful than the sales of more than two hundred million PlayStation and PlayStation 2 units, plus seventeen million handheld PlayStation Portables, are the potential connections that the PlayStation creates between Sony hardware and Sony content. The next-generation PlayStation 3, which is scheduled for sale in November, will be driven by the new Cell microprocessor and will also include a Blu-ray digital-videodisk player, a high-definition technology that either will or will not become the next industry standard, replacing the current DVD format.



Today's ideal prototypical consumer is a twenty-something technophile—not to be confused with a techno-geek—who is constantly on the move (an Urban Nomad, in marketing parlance) and wants to have networkable devices that will move with him. Next year, when Sony Pictures releases "Spider-Man 3"—which will feature visual effects from Sony Pictures Imageworks and will be shown in some theatres with Sony 4K projectors—there will be, naturally, a Spider-Man PlayStation game created by Sony Computer Entertainment; a Sony/BMG Music soundtrack available on Sony Connect, an online service, for listening on a Sony Ericsson Walkman cell phone; a Universal Media Disc version of the movie that can be viewed on the PlayStation Portable; and a Blu-ray videodisk version that can be viewed on the Sony Bravia high-definition television, via a Sony Blu-ray player. No doubt I've left something out.

Cell and Blu-ray represent huge investments. Yet Blu-ray is in danger of losing out to a similar technology. Toshiba has created a rival format called HD DVD. Both technologies are superior to the existing DVD in picture and sound quality, and each has enormous storage capacity for various interactive applications—though Blu-ray's is substantially larger, because it's been designed to accommodate potential features that haven't yet been invented. The problem for Sony is that Blu-ray is considerably more expensive: Toshiba's cheapest HD DVD players sell for about five hundred dollars; the least expensive Blu-ray machines will cost almost twice as much.

All but one of the major Hollywood studios have committed to release Blu-ray versions of their films, and only three have agreed to make HD DVDs. But Sony's advantage has deteriorated, because Toshiba has already won the race to store shelves. (The first Blu-ray disk players go on sale this summer.) A showdown looms that Sony cannot really afford to lose. This happened before, notoriously, in the early eighties, when Sony's videocassette-recorder technology, Betamax, despite having superior picture quality, was forced into extinction after losing the marketplace war with the cheaper VHS format.

Right now, Cell looks much more like a winning proposition. The chip, which is startlingly adept at creating photo-realistic graphics, is the fruit of an unusual five-year research-and-development collaboration between Sony, I.B.M., and, of all companies, Toshiba. One morning at Sony Media World, a five-minute taxi ride from Stringer's office, I witnessed a Cell-chip demonstration conducted by a young woman who wore a black suit, a pink pastel neckerchief, and a sprinkle of glitter on her eyelids. The show began with a hyperreal image of a yellow-and-orange toy duck in a blue mosaic bathtub, displayed on a Sony high-definition monitor. Two sailboats kerplopped into the tub. "Please watch the movement of the sails," the woman said. I did, and they flapped as if affixed to real sailboats in real water rippled by real wind. Cannonballs flew, shredding sails and splashing. "What if we decide to add some more ducks?" Instantly, four more ducks materialized, then a submarine, then a downpour of ducks, which filled and overflowed the tub. All this was rendered with a resolution and a color intensity destined to bring thousands of hours of sublime solipsistic pleasure to mostly male fourteen-to-thirty-five-year-old PlayStation jockeys worldwide.

PlayStation gestated under the supervision of Ken Kutaragi, who is perhaps equally famous for his engineering brilliance and his lack of concomitant interpersonal skills. For what it's worth—roughly, billions plus many billions more—PlayStation oddly vindicates the traditional Sony silo mentality, or, more aptly, the mentality of certain silos. It shows what can happen when engineers are encouraged and left alone to formulate completely off-the-wall stuff. And Stringer, the practiced synthesizer, knows it. A major theme of his speeches during the past year has been the imperative to give engineers the latitude they need. "The people who make the products are the stars," he likes to say. (A decade spent managing Sony's Hollywood properties has enhanced his command of the superficiality and the substance of certain show-business rituals. It's clearly a portable proficiency.)

Meanwhile, Stringer has extended an unfettered invitation to a group of Sony engineers who worked on the Cell chip: open windows in your silo by dreaming up potential new applications. (Virtual reality that matches "The Matrix"? Hyperrealistic, real-time animations to facilitate surgery?) Ask not what the Cell chip can do for PlayStation, Stringer urged; ask what it can do for the world.

After the Cell-chip demonstration, I listened in on a bento-box lunch conversation between Stringer, who assiduously never dines alone, and eight senior marketing managers. I got the impression that they were all meeting Stringer, and perhaps each other, for the first time. The lunch took place in a windowless conference room down the hall from his office. (He has since moved to the seventh floor, where he shares a suite with Chubachi and their respective staffs.) Andrew House, a slightly built, goateed fellow in his early forties, sat next to Stringer. House embodies the other half of the answer to Michael Eisner's loaded question: better technology or better commercial? In September, Stringer appointed him to a new position, with a broad mandate to rethink the future of the Sony brand and the marketing tactics that should logically follow.

House, who spent most of his Sony career as an executive at Sony Computer Entertainment America—much of it devoted to marketing PlayStation—shares Stringer's Welsh pedigree and, unlike him, speaks fluent Japanese. Stringer, having concluded that trying to learn Japanese wasn't an efficient use of his time, gave up years ago. But, House assured me, "It's a mistake to overestimate the linguistic component, because the idea of self-deprecation will translate."

Nor can it hurt that Stringer smiles generously. When he conducts town meetings in Sony factories, he occasionally slips in droll remarks that might elude the workers. "Mainly, I'm conveying an impression of conviviality, trying to develop a relationship with people who think I'm a cost-cutting fool," he said.

At the luncheon, the marketing managers seemed ready to be wooed, but at the outset there was a self-conscious uncertainty about protocol. Everyone spoke for about a minute, offering a description of his or her history with the company.

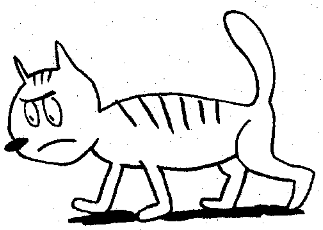
"Thank you for coming to meet with us, Sir Howard," a manager named Hiroko Saito said.

"Please don't call me Sir Howard." (He was knighted in 2000.)

"What should we call you?" she asked.

"Call me Howard."

Then Stringer began what amounts to his stump speech, deftly tailored for the occasion. Sony's "sales and marketing around the world are not as powerful as they should be," he declared, citing an anecdotal theory that, in recent years, Sony's Japanese engineers had become so comfortable with English that they'd stopped relying upon the typically more fluent sales staff to explain to them the nature of Western consumer behavior, and, as a consequence, had become even more isolated from the realities of the global marketplace. Moreover, advertising budgets tended to get spread around fecklessly. "We've been so democratic in our approach to selling that everything gets equal weight," he said.



The previous year, in conjunction with the company's sixtieth anniversary, Stringer explained, there had been plans to launch a campaign promoting sixty great Sony products. "And I just sort of collapsed at a meeting," he said. "I said, 'We can't talk about sixty products just because it happens to be the sixtieth anniversary! We don't *have* sixty fantastic products.' They'd put five movies on the list and I said, 'I know two of those movies are going to be awful. So for God's sake don't put ads in the newspaper saying, "Here are sixty great Sony products." It's asking too much.'

"My point is that if you fragment all your advertising, and if you're in a silo that makes a digital-camera-equipped toothbrush—we don't have one, in case you're worrying—then you say, 'I want my share of the ad budget to promote my electronic toothbrush.' But if you subdivide a two-billion-dollar ad budget a thousand times, how much reach do you have?"

Instead, Stringer explained, Sony needed to concentrate on promoting "champion products"—Bravia televisions, PlayStation, the first high-definition camcorder, the Sony Ericsson Walkman phone—"that would generate excitement about the brand itself." Which was to say, and he did so literally, that Sony needed to behave more like Apple. Still, his basic message was heartily optimistic: "This is an opportunity essentially to transform the way we do things. Nothing I've said is a surprise; you're all experts; hopefully nothing is terrifying. It's actually a huge opportunity. If the world thought we don't have the goods and we didn't, it would be terrible. But we do."

Everyone took a turn, Andrew House spoke at length, and the discussion lasted an hour and a half. Along the way, Stringer described how he perceived himself in the chain of evolution from Akio Morita.

"Morita-san believed in continuity," he said. "But, when the founder dies, successive professional managers don't carry the same weight that the founder has. It was true of the company I used to work for, CBS. The founder had enormous power, but at some point you make this transition. I'm not eager for godlike status. I'm eager to get people who specialize in something to understand the value of Sony and to make it plausible."

Finally: "Anyway, thank you all for coming. Andy and I expect e-mail. If you see something that caught your eye or something good that can be replicated, that would be good. And I'll distress you all by saying that we will do this again."

"Hit me again—I'm trying to remember a woman."

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For all of Stringer's ostensible nonchalance, the fact is that he oversees an enterprise whose operatives are extremely thorough when it comes to manicuring his image. With one exception, every time I met with him or a Sony executive while writing this article, a Sony employee equipped with a Sony digital recorder was also present. A considerably more elaborate case in point: the Consumer Electronics Show, an annual four-day exercise in sensory overload, which draws to Las Vegas, right after the New Year, a hundred and fifty thousand members of the trade and the media. The hangar-size exhibition halls of the Las Vegas Convention Center brim with wares—*faster, bigger, smaller, slimmer, brighter, sharper, simpler, trickier*—that exponentially intensify the local ambient-glitz quotient. This year, Stringer had been invited to deliver a keynote address—an event that the *Times* called his "coming-out party."

Stringer's presentation and Sony's twenty-five-thousand-square-foot exhibit were titled "Entertaining the Future." The message was that Sony, as a purveyor of content and technology, could deliver the digital dream right now, from its high-definition digital video recorder to the Sony Reader, a nine-ounce, multi-thousand-page-capacity tablet-like device for reading crisply rendered digital versions of books, which could be downloaded from Sony's online store.

On the eve of Stringer's keynote, during a rehearsal in the theatre of the Las Vegas Hilton, he seemed uncharacteristically flappable. He wore a charcoal-gray suit, a red-white-and-blue striped necktie, and a creased white shirt that was not quite tucked in. His talk, several months in the shaping, called for him to preside, impresario-like, during an hour-long variety show of sorts. For part of the time, he would stand center stage, a genial authority figure, pitching "Sony's unique marriage of content and technology"; for the rest, he would banter with a succession of Sony executives and celebrity guests, among them Dan Brown, the author of "The Da Vinci Code," which had been made into a soon-to-be-released film by Sony Pictures, and Ron Howard, Brian Grazer, and Tom Hanks (director, producer, and star, respectively, of said mega-movie). At the moment, however, the stage directions didn't feel right. Why should he sit idly next to Brown as he speechified from a teleprompter? Wouldn't it make more sense to be on opposite sides of the stage? And though Stringer can extemporize on virtually any subject, he was having trouble reading his lines. "I dislike the idea of scripted spontaneity," he complained. "The problem I'm having is that it's neither conversation nor a speech."

"From the audience, it looks fine," a staff member assured him.

"Really? Then why am I so uncomfortable?"

When Andy House came forward to offer encouragement, Stringer said, "Don't lie to me, Andy. Because I'm dying up here."

During one idle moment—it was becoming a long night—Stringer started riffing about a pet theory of his, concerning cartoons that depicted characters named Howard. "It's always Howard the pathetic," he said. "It's never Howard the bold. It's Howard the bumbler. Howard the henpecked. Howard the schmuck."

When I left, shortly before midnight, the rehearsal had another hour or so to go. At nine the next morning, however, the live performance went off without a hitch. Tom Hanks even managed to turn Stringer's misgivings into an asset. After a clip from "The Da Vinci Code" had been screened, he said, in a wooden monotone, "It's a pleasure to be here with you today, Howard, to be able to deliver these heartfelt comments off of one of your new, extraordinary Sony SXRD high-definition teleprompters." Stringer told his scripted jokes well: he got a big laugh out of the gate with an anecdote about the late Kerry Packer, the Australian media tycoon and fearless gambler. And he ad-libbed nimbly when Hanks needled him.

But many "if"s hovered over the proceedings. Would "Da Vinci" enable Sony Pictures to recover from an extended slump (major disappointments in 2005: "Memoirs of a Geisha," "Bewitched," "Stealth"; bright spots: "Capote" and "Hitch")? Would PlayStation 3 replicate the success of its predecessors? And what about Blu-ray? Stringer cheerfully extolled Blu-ray's virtues—"not evolutionary, it is revolutionary . . . dramatically greater storage capacity than any other format . . . interactive features and all kinds of extras . . . an amazing experience for your eyes and your ears"—with an assist from Michael Dell, who testified that Dell planned to feature Blu-ray disk drives in its future computers.

What Stringer couldn't project was any genuine air of expectancy. With none of Sony's production values, Bill Gates, the C.E.O. of Microsoft, had held forth on the same stage for an hour and a half, and his off-the-cuff responses to questions from the audience were received as if he were Yoda or the chairman of the Fed. Steve Jobs, of Apple, didn't even need to show up—Macworld Expo, a separate circus, usually begins right after the Consumer Electronics Show—and his oracular presence was ubiquitous by its absence. Stringer had bonhomie and savoir-faire to burn, but he was not a messiah, and his agenda could still be trip-wired by unintended consequences or unforeseen technologies. Las Vegas that week was an ideal place to entertain chaos theories.

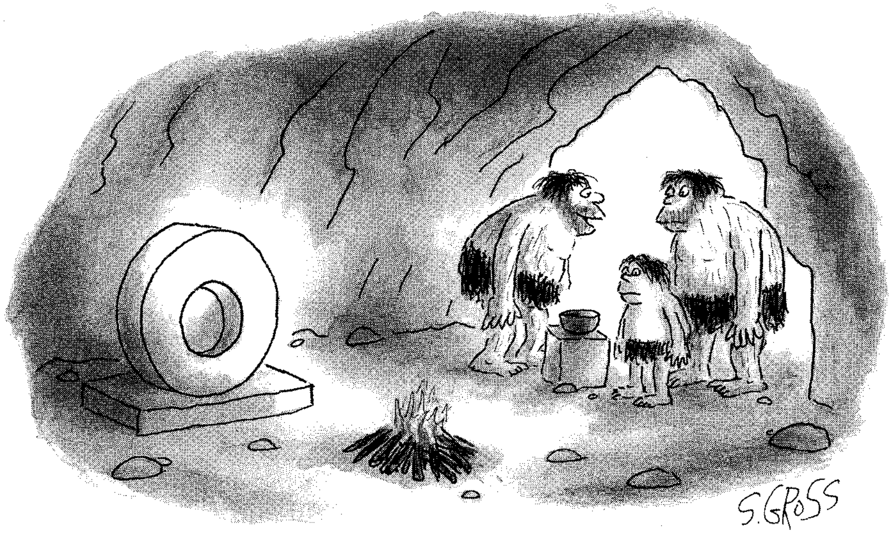
Stringer's final thought sounded like an implicit acknowledgment: "Our newly empowered digital citizenry all over the globe have to grapple with the same sticky questions—such as who owns what, and who has the right to share content. These are questions that none of us can afford to duck. Content and technology are strange bedfellows. We are joined together. Sometimes we misunderstand each other. But isn't that, after all, the definition of marriage?"

"To this day, I still think of Howard as a journalist," the writer Nicholas Pileggi, who befriended Stringer more than thirty years ago, when they collaborated on a CBS documentary about Italian-Americans, said. "Howard gets the overview. He can drop statistics and he knows the minutiae, but he gets the overview."

Stringer started at WCBS Radio, in New York, in 1967. His job, according to Ed Bradley, who was then a reporter at WCBS, was "to sit in the control room and make sure the engineer had the right cartridge in the machine and keep a log of what was on the air." Bradley remembers coming in one morning about five-thirty, noticing that Stringer was wearing one black shoe and one brown shoe, and thinking, How do you keep track of everything that goes on the air and you can't even keep track of your shoes? On the other hand, he said, "He was very good and very organized at what he did. He didn't make mistakes."

Within a year, Stringer had become a researcher in the elections unit, then moved to "CBS Reports," which had been a cornerstone of CBS News since Edward R. Murrow's prime. Stringer likes to say that when he turned thirty and realized that he was still a researcher he became "vaguely suicidal." He got over it. By thirty-four, he was the executive producer of "CBS Reports"; by thirty-nine, he was the executive producer of the "CBS Evening News," with Dan Rather. In the intensely political atmosphere at the network—especially as events unfolded in the mid-eighties, when Laurence Tisch assumed the role of chief executive—Stringer earned a reputation for navigating as adroitly as anyone. He spent three years as president of CBS News and seven as president of the CBS Broadcast Group, with responsibility for entertainment programming. When he arrived, CBS was the third-rated network in prime time, and when he departed—having, among other things, persuaded David Letterman to move his show from NBC—it had spent three consecutive seasons in first place. Depending upon whose hindsight one accepts, the Tisch legacy at CBS is either that fiscal sanity and accountability were brought to bear upon a lax, spendthrift corporate culture or that a myopic obsession with controlling costs inflicted irreparable harm upon a once revered institution, CBS News. (Tisch cut thirty million dollars from the news budget.) What's noteworthy about Stringer's role in Tisch's austerity campaign is that, while he was very much involved in discussions about how budgets would be cut and which news jobs would be eliminated, he was spared the deep animosity toward Tisch. Whenever news employees had to be laid off, he tried to tell them face to face. He regards the entire episode as the most painful of his career.

In 1995, he made a rare misstep—he quit CBS to become the C.E.O. of a telecommunications start-up that soon imploded. Still, two years later, at lunch in a Tokyo restaurant that served live shrimp, Nobuyuki Idei offered him the presidency of Sony Corporation of America. ("I didn't know whether to take the job or save the shrimp.") As the honoree at a dinner in New York celebrating entrepreneurship, a few months ago, Stringer said of the start-up, "I found out that four per cent of nothing is nothing. Giving me an award for being an entrepreneur is like giving Donald Trump an award for shyness." The truth is, he made at least two—as they



"Welcome to the Museum of Science and Industry."

don't say in Wales—very big deals at Sony Corporation of America. He orchestrated a fifty-fifty joint venture between Sony Music Corporation and Bertelsmann Music Group, which created the second-largest recording and music-publishing entity in the world, and he oversaw a complicated merger that enabled Sony to gain control of a five-billion-dollar asset—M-G-M's enormous library of films.

What was Stringer doing in America in the first place? His father, who had grown up in an orphanage, almost emigrated to the States at the age of twelve or thirteen. "There was a moment when social services were offering people assisted passage to go overseas," Stringer said. "It turned out he was about a hundred yards on the wrong side of the county line, so he wasn't qualified." To his son, Major Harry Stringer conveyed "a liking of all things American." They laughed together at Burns and Allen, Phil Silvers, and Jack Benny, and they admired Murrow's work when it aired on the BBC.

The quintessential narrative in the Stringer biography—not a Rosebud tale, exactly, but certainly his friends' favorite story—is this:

Upon his graduation from Oxford, in 1965, a combination of factors—his encounters with Americans there, John Kennedy and the New Frontier, skepticism about his opportunities in England—prompted him to emigrate.

"I don't get angry very easily," he said, describing the day he went to the U.S. consulate in London to complete the paperwork. "I was thrilled to be getting a green card. In those days, it was easy—you just applied. But for some reason they made me wait for hours and hours. By the time I finally met with this bureaucrat, a civil servant, I was exhausted and pissed off. Because this wasn't America; America was supposed to be efficient and welcoming. My father and I used to talk about people who have a moment of power, even though they're very low on the totem, and instead of being generous use it to put someone down. This was one of those guys. He said, 'What makes you think you can get a job in the United States of America?' And I said, quick as a flash, with a mouth that I shouldn't have dared, 'Well, *you* did.' "

A few weeks later, Stringer sailed for New York with two hundred dollars, copies of what he soon gathered was a naïvely scant résumé, and the vague intention of finding a job in television. A friend of a friend referred him to someone at CBS; he went for an interview, and was hired for a hundred and thirty-five dollars per week as a logging clerk—answering a phone and keeping track of viewers' reactions to whatever they'd just seen on the network. (Teen-age girls who called after the Beatles appeared on "The Ed Sullivan Show" were treated to his impersonation of George Harrison.) When he'd been in the country about three months, he received a letter from the Selective Service System, which instructed him to report for a draft physical. He was going to Vietnam? Plainly, there'd been a mistake—not only was he an alien; he'd barely unpacked—except that there hadn't been. He wondered if the functionary whom he'd insulted had exacted revenge.

Few twenty-two-year-olds facing the same dilemma—be conscripted, in effect, as a foreign legionnaire and dispatched, in all likelihood, to a guerrilla-war zone, or go home to cozy and noncombative (if claustrophobic) England—would have needed a lot of time to think it over. Neither did Stringer. Repatriation would have doomed his American dream, or, at the least, postponed it indefinitely.

Stringer showed me photocopies of some of his Army correspondence, which he'd received from the widow of John Roberts, who had been his main history tutor at Oxford and was the warden, or dean, of Merton College. The letters depict Stringer's cheerful sense of irony ("It's rather disillusioning to discover that one is a coward after all, despite the rigours of a public school education. All those cold showers and early morning runs were in vain?") and what amounted to a clear-eyed bewilderment ("The VC prisoners we take are stained with the mud of the rice paddies. . . . They are truly out of touch, and their reaction to medical treatment and kindness is often staggering. What they are fighting for dominates their minds far more than what they are fighting against. . . . It is this problem which makes the end of the war seem so far away"). What's conspicuously absent is any shade of bitterness or resentment about his situation. Before Stringer left for Vietnam, he'd been promised, with an assist from a former Rhodes Scholar's father who had Pentagon connections, a non-combat assignment. But when the offer came through, after he'd arrived at the battlefront complex in Long Binh, he passed it up.

The American encampment at Long Binh was open on one side to the jungle ("the monsoon season is staggering to a deceptive close . . . it rains almost every day but not every hour") and about a mile from a munitions dump that the Vietcong would frequently find ways to ignite, with spectacular results. One night, when Stringer was on guard duty, another M.P. lit a cigarette, which instantly drew enemy fire. For the rest of his war, Stringer stayed as far as possible from smokers. He eventually became a sergeant and a personnel officer; in recent years, after articles about him mentioned that he was a decorated Vietnam veteran, he would say, "You get some medals for simply showing up. And I was actually in charge of medals." Perhaps his most unsettling moment occurred at the end of his tour, when a transport plane that was taking him out of Long Binh came under mortar attack.

Stringer's willingness to risk his life by going to Vietnam, the way it unfolded and his comportment along the way, might seem an intuitively brilliant career move. Long before anyone explicitly raised the question, he'd established that he was courageous, quick-witted, a team player, and reliable to a fault. Which, while demonstrably true, was not necessarily relevant. In fact, what happened between his initial arrival in America and his safe return from Vietnam was largely fortuitous. Two years had elapsed and he was back where he started. A more pertinent and simpler explanation, I realized, was the one proffered by his friend Nora Ephron. "What I always thought," she said, "was that it was a story about a young Brit in love with America."

Not that Stringer has forsaken his Welshness: to the contrary, he unapologetically milks it. Welsh societies invite him to speak on St. David's Day, honoring the country's patron saint.

When he can oblige, he tweaks a speech that he calls "A Child's Summer in Wales," a recollection of idylls in close quarters with his mother's extended family in a seaside village that was a magnet for vacationing coal miners—"the Coney Island of the South Wales coast." Of the train ride from Paddington Station: "When the train finally crossed the Welsh border, our compartment would be united in song, with the click of steel wheels over steel track acting as a metronome for every melody." There was, by his reckoning, no downside to being Welsh ("the least obstreperous of ethnic groups"). Also, allegedly, the least class-conscious: "The essence of traditional Welshness is the belief that social worth and cultural achievement need not be related to worldly success." It's irrelevant, in other words, that he now lives in what qualifies as post-empire pre-hedge-fund baronial splendor.

Stringer boarded a different train one morning a couple of weeks ago, a Eurostar that departed from Waterloo Station bound for the Cannes Film Festival. Also on board were Tom Hanks and other actors in "The Da Vinci Code." At the festival, the movie provoked a polite standing ovation from the opening-night crowd, succeeded, in the next few days, by an extraordinary round of flagellation from the critics. Oh, yeah? On its opening weekend, it took in almost a quarter of a billion dollars, the second-highest worldwide gross ever—testimony to moviegoers' indifference to (or obliviousness of) reviews, as well as to a Sony Pictures marketing strategy that made certain that no sentient human failed to grasp that this was the most must-see piece of entertainment since the "Mona Lisa" arrived at the Louvre.

A few days earlier, I went to see Stringer at his home, a graciously furnished brick Edwardian farmstead an hour west of London. This is where his wife, Dr. Jennifer Patterson, a dermatologist, and their thirteen-year-old son and ten-year-old daughter live and where he turns up at routine intervals in his global circumnavigations. The house has been added on to in recent years, along with a few new outbuildings, including a stable, that blend in seamlessly. As Stringer led me past a riding ring—his wife rides daily, the children do often, he never does—he said, "I always thought I'd look tall in the saddle and all that shit. But it's much trickier than that." Next to a swimming pool stood a just completed multipurpose bungalow—three-bay garage, screening room downstairs, office upstairs. The office had a teal sofa, armchair, and ottoman, a red Oriental rug, skylights, and a fresh-paint aroma. Stringer sat with his back to a wooden desk, atop which rested both a Sony Vaio P.C. and a featherweight Vaio laptop. A shelf behind the desk contained small, gilt-framed photographs of his family on horseback.

He'd been in England for four days, during what had played out, a couple of coasts away, as a noisy week for Sony. At the Electronic Entertainment Expo, in Los Angeles, the PlayStation 3 had been unveiled with two unexpectedly high price tags—four hundred and ninety-nine dollars, or, with a larger hard drive, five hundred and ninety-nine dollars. This compared with the two-hundred-dollars-cheaper extant versions of the Microsoft Xbox 360, its main rival. Worse, the Xbox had beat the PlayStation 3 to stores by nearly a year. (Stringer has yet to fix Sony's embarrassing slowness problem. When the release of the PlayStation 3 was pushed back by six months, gaming enthusiasts fumed.) Sony's press conference was preceded and followed by an epidemic of hyperventilation in the electronic-games blogosphere that made the Brangelina baby watch resemble a soybean-futures report. Few of the gamers trifled with spelling or punctuation—"I'm soooo happy to hear this!! Finally sony is going to crash and burn"; "I loved how all the Sony fanboys jumped on the bandwagon when that butt ugly boomerang controller came out"—but, pro or con, they *cared*. Within Sony, the real drama concerned the fact that, even at these prices, each PlayStation 3 sold represented a substantial loss, a reflection of production costs of the Cell processor and the Blu-ray drive, features notably missing from the Xbox 360. Instead, what Microsoft had that posed a very real threat to Sony was sufficient cash to fund a price war for as long as Bill Gates felt like it. (Analysts say that Microsoft is losing more than a hundred dollars per unit; Microsoft claims it's breaking even.)

Stringer had been caught in an almost irreconcilable squeeze at Sony from the start—the divergence of Japanese and Western expectations—but he'd seen it coming. Now he faced a problem of his own devising. If Sony was betting a colossal number of chips on champion products, those products had to speak the same language and pay off before someone else's champion products redefined the game.

"The design of PlayStation 3 is not simply to build a better video-game player," he said. "It's to build a Sony computer with enough processing power to achieve multiple objectives—in a networked world, tying in lots of applications." The higher retail price, he added, was a testament to the fact that the PlayStation 3 was a technology for the "future," whereas the Xbox 360 would soon become obsolete.

The decision to include a Blu-ray drive had vital strategic implications. In the short term, it might actually cut into sales of Sony's stand-alone Blu-ray players. Or, if PlayStation 3 was a huge hit, it might be like injecting a virus into the world's bloodstream, inclining more consumers to covet Blu-ray home computers, video recorders, and other stuff yet to be conceived in Sony's—and who else's?—silos.

"You can measure a company's performance by the excellence across the board," Stringer said. "And I think we've put the company back on the road to that. PlayStation 3 is obviously the most sophisticated example of it. Where it will take us in the world of connectivity and computers is hard to say."

He spoke proudly of the Cell chip. "It has driven processing power to another level," he said. He added that the chip proved that Sony had learned from the Betamax debacle—instead of going it alone, it had enlisted powerful partners at the outset. "I.B.M. and Toshiba and other companies are racing to develop applications for the Cell chip; Intel and Microsoft and others are working on a similar chip to try to catch up with it," Stringer said. How to take advantage of this new level of processing power would be "up to the imaginations of the engineers." He went on, "It's going to change a lot of devices, but it's not going to change them over-

night. The odd thing is that we may be fighting Microsoft on one front but we are in the same business—we make P.C.s and so forth—so our relationship with Microsoft is bifocal, as it is with Google, as it is with Yahoo. We ought to succeed, because we now have more of the elements."

I asked Stringer how he'd spent his week at home. He had a meeting in London on Monday with the C.E.O. of a large consumer-electronics company, and that night he'd been a presenter at the Sony Radio Academy Awards, the radio equivalent, in Britain, of the Emmys. Tuesday, he'd gone to a dinner with General Sir Mike Jackson, Britain's chief Army commander. Today, he had a board meeting in London, another tomorrow, and a dinner party at home that evening, including a screening of "Da Vinci." A driver would soon arrive for the ride to London, and he suggested a quick tour of the property.

The way out was through the screening room, which had a white ceramic-tile floor and ten lightweight white leather armchairs.

"Want to see it work?" he said. "It's actually a bit of a hoot."

He tapped a small touch screen once and the curtains began to close, a seventy-two-inch high-definition screen descended, and so did a ceiling-mounted Sony Qualia projector. "I bought this projector about six months ago," he said. "They've since come out with a new one that's about half the size and probably half the price."

Was there, by chance, a PlayStation on the premises? There was not.

We went into the house, passed through the kitchen, a hallway hung with photographs of Stringer and other members of various school rugby and soccer teams, a center hall, and went out the front door. A cherry tree bloomed at one corner of the house, as did an orderly, variegated garden in the back. The house sits on eighty acres, some of it an apple orchard but mostly pasture. It was an almost cloudless day. Tieless for a change, Stringer wore a navy shirt, black pants, and black leather shoes. We climbed over a fence stile and into a field that a neighboring farmer's herd of Jersey cattle frequently visited. Some ducks had settled that morning on a small pond. We stopped at a paddock fence and a white mare trotted over. Stringer considered opening the gate, then reconsidered. "I'm not afraid of horses," he said. "But I'm not particularly au courant with this one."

At one point, he announced, "I'm going to show you a typical bucolic English scene." We tramped about a hundred yards through tall grass, stopped, and looked due east, toward London. The vista was as advertised—a vale through chalk hills, a parallax of sloping fields in various shades of green, extending for miles.

In 1992, while still at CBS, Stringer commissioned Peter Davis and his son Nick to make a documentary to coincide with the thirtieth anniversary of the assassination of John Kennedy. The finished work was a largely admiring portrait that also addressed J.F.K.'s personal indiscretions, the brutal cynicism of his father, and the lengths he'd gone to conceal his physical infirmities. When Stringer saw the finished film, his reaction was "It just shows how much you have to give up to get to that position."

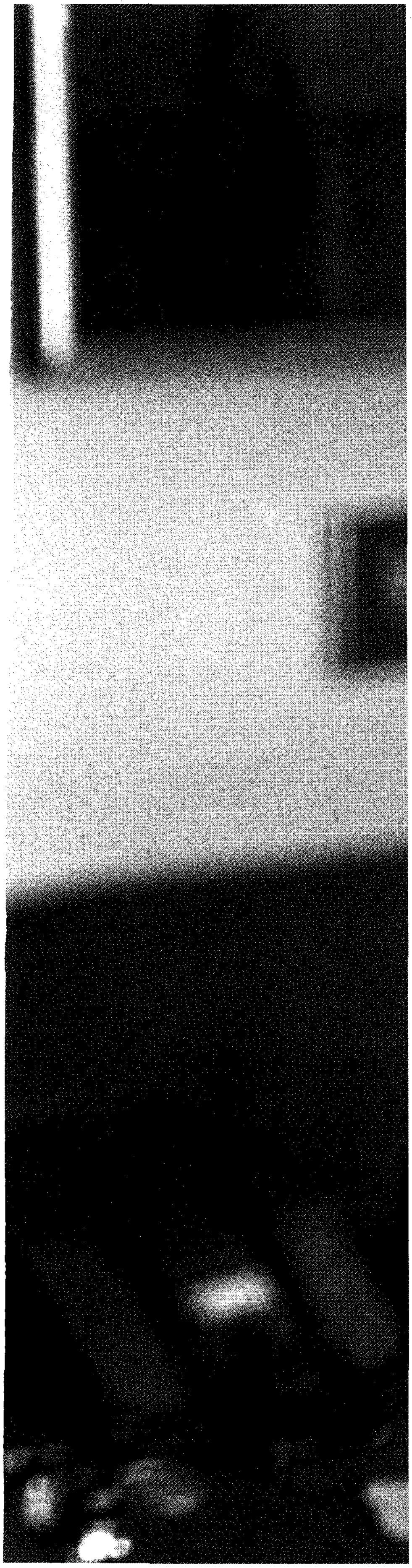
Earlier this year, CBS News focussed the cameras on its former boss, with a "60 Minutes" profile of Stringer. It included one oddly unself-edited moment, a scene from a town-hall meeting at a Sony factory in Japan. Wearing a translation earpiece and a taupe cotton worker's uniform over a blue shirt and red necktie, Stringer said, "I don't see my family very much." A pause, and an afterthought that he later surely regretted: "My family is you." Anyway, from where we were standing, that obviously wasn't true.

On our way back toward the house, he pointed out a gliding bird, a red kite cruising for carrion. A pheasant burst from a hedgerow. We detoured through the stables, where the groom, a smiling, ruddy, middle-aged woman, said, "It's a blacksmithing morning," and, indeed, a farrier's van, with a forge in the rear, was backed into a doorway.

As we left the stable, Stringer said, "She's just been hired. I would have introduced you, but damned if I can remember her name." He laughed. "It's the sort of thing that can happen when you're a visitor to your own home." ♦

GIANCOLOMBO/CONTRASTO/REDUX

Fallaci in Milan, in 1958. Her cunning intelligence and bold aggressiveness—coupled with good looks and European chic—made he



n unsettling interviewer.

LIFE AND LETTERS

THE AGITATOR

Oriana Fallaci directs her fury toward Islam.

BY MARGARET TALBOT

"Yesterday, I was hysterical," the Italian journalist and novelist Oriana Fallaci said. She was telling me a story about a local dog owner and the liberties he'd allowed his animal to take in front of Fallaci's town house, on the Upper East Side. Big mistake. "I no longer have the energy to get *really* angry, like I used to," she added. It called to mind what the journalist Robert Scheer said about Fallaci after interviewing her for *Playboy*, in 1981: "For the first time in my life, I found myself feeling sorry for the likes of Khomeini, Qaddafi, the Shah of Iran, and Kissinger—all of whom had been the objects of her wrath—the people she described as interviewing 'with a thousand feelings of rage.' "

For two decades, from the mid-nineteen-sixties to the mid-nineteen-eighties, Fallaci was one of the sharpest political interviewers in the world. Her subjects were among the world's most powerful figures: Yasir Arafat, Golda Meir, Indira Gandhi, Haile Selassie, Deng Xiaoping. Henry Kissinger, who later wrote that his 1972 interview with her was "the single most disastrous conversation I have ever had with any member of the press," said that he had been flattered into granting it by the company he'd be keeping as part of Fallaci's "journalistic pantheon." It was more like a collection of pelts: Fallaci never left her subjects unskinned.

Fallaci's manner of interviewing was deliberately unsettling: she approached each encounter with studied aggressiveness, made frequent nods to European existentialism (she often disarmed her subjects with bald questions about death, God, and pity), and displayed a sinuous, crafty intelligence. It didn't hurt that she was petite and beautiful, with straight, smooth hair that she wore parted in the middle or in pigtails; melancholy blue-gray eyes, set off by eyeliner; a cigarette-cured voice; and an adorable Italian accent. During the Vietnam War, she was sometimes photographed in fatigues and a helmet; her rucksack bore handwritten instructions to return her body to the Italian Ambassador "if K.I.A." In these images she looked as slight and vulnerable as a child. When she was shot, in 1968, while reporting on the student demonstrations in Mexico City, and then confined by the police with the wounded and the dying on one floor of an apartment building, the first impulse of the students around her was to protect her; one boy gave her his sweater, in order to cover her face from the drip of a sewage pipe. Her essential toughness never stopped taking people—men, especially—by surprise.

Fallaci's journalism, at first conducted for the Italian magazine *L'Europeo* and later published in translation throughout the world, was infused with a "mythic sense of political evil," as the writer Vivian Gornick once put it—an almost adolescent aversion to power, which suited the temperament of the times. As Fallaci explained in her preface to "Interview with History," a 1976 collection of Q. & A.s, "Whether it comes from a despotic sovereign or an elected president, from a murderous general or a beloved leader, I see power as an inhuman and hateful phenomenon. . . . I have always looked on disobedience toward the oppressive as the only way to use the miracle of having been born." In Fallaci's interview with Kissinger, she told him that he had become known as "Nixon's mental wet nurse," and lured him into boasting that Americans admired him because he "always acted alone"—like "the cowboy who leads the wagon train by riding ahead alone on his horse, the cowboy who rides all alone into the town." Political cartoonists mercilessly lampooned this remark, and, according to Kissinger's memoirs, the quote soured his relations with Nixon. (Kissinger claimed that she had taken his words out of context.) But the most remarkable moment in the in-

MAYNARD
WILSON
"The Bull Whisperer"
DIFFEE

terview came when Fallaci bluntly asked him, about Vietnam, "Don't you find, Dr. Kissinger, that it's been a useless war?," and Kissinger began his reply with the words "On this, I can agree."

Fallaci's interview with Khomeini, which appeared in the *Times* on October 7, 1979, soon after the Iranian revolution, was the most exhilarating example of her pugilistic approach. Fallaci had travelled to Qum to try to secure an interview with Khomeini, and she waited ten days before he received her. She had followed instructions from the new Islamist regime, and arrived at the Ayatollah's home barefoot and wrapped in a chador. Almost immediately, she unleashed a barrage of questions about the closing of opposition newspapers, the treatment of Iran's Kurdish minority, and the summary executions performed by the new regime. When Khomeini defended these practices, noting that some of the people killed had been brutal servants of the Shah, Fallaci demanded, "Is it right to shoot the poor prostitute or a woman who is unfaithful to her husband, or a man who loves another man?" The Ayatollah answered with a pair of remorseless metaphors. "If your finger suffers from gangrene, what do you do? Do you let the whole hand, and then the body, become filled with gangrene, or do you cut the finger off? What brings corruption to an entire country and its people must be pulled up like the weeds that infest a field of wheat."

Fallaci continued posing indignant questions about the treatment of women in the new Islamic state. Why, she asked, did Khomeini compel women to "hide themselves, all bundled up," when they had proved their equal stature by helping to bring about the Islamic revolution? Khomeini replied that the women who "contributed to the revolution were, and are, women with the Islamic dress"; they weren't women like Fallaci, who "go around all uncovered, dragging behind them a tail of men." A few minutes later, Fallaci asked a more insolent question: "How do you swim in a chador?" Khomeini snapped, "Our customs are none of your business. If you do not like Islamic dress you are not obliged to wear it. Because Islamic dress is for good and proper young women." Fallaci saw an opening, and charged in. "That's very kind of you, Imam. And since you said so, I'm going to take off this stupid, medieval rag right now." She yanked off her chador.

In a recent e-mail, Fallaci said of Khomeini, "At that point, it was he who acted offended. He got up like a cat, as agile as a cat, an agility I would never expect in a man as old as he was, and he left me. In fact, I had to wait for twenty-four hours (or forty-eight?) to see him again and conclude the interview." When Khomeini let her return, his son Ahmed gave Fallaci some advice: his father was still very angry, so she'd better not even mention the word "chador." Fallaci turned the tape recorder back on and immediately revisited the subject. "First he looked at me in astonishment," she said. "Total astonishment. Then his lips moved in a shadow of a smile. Then the shadow of a smile became a real smile. And finally it became a laugh. He laughed, yes. And, when the interview was over, Ahmed whispered to me, 'Believe me, I never saw my father laugh. I think you are the only person in this world who made him laugh.' "

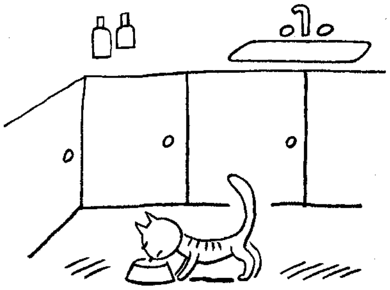
Fallaci recalled that she found Khomeini intelligent, and "the most handsome old man I had ever met in my life. He resembled the 'Moses' sculpted by Michelangelo." And, she said, Khomeini was "not a puppet like Arafat or Qaddafi or the many other dictators I met in the Islamic world. He was a sort of Pope, a sort of king—a real leader. And it did not take long to realize that in spite of his quiet appearance he represented the Robespierre or the Lenin of something which would go very far and would poison the world. People loved him too much. They saw in him another Prophet. Worse: a God."

Upon leaving Khomeini's house after her first interview, Fallaci was besieged by Iranians who wanted to touch her because she'd been in the Ayatollah's presence. "The sleeves of my shirt were all torn off, my slacks, too," she recalled. "My arms were full of bruises, and hands, too. Do believe me: everything started with Khomeini. Without Khomeini, we would not be where we are. What a pity that, when pregnant with him, his mother did not choose to have an abortion."

Today, Fallaci believes, the Western world is in danger of being engulfed by radical Islam. Since September 11, 2001, she has written three short, angry books advancing this argument. Two of them, "The Rage and the Pride" and "The Force of Reason," have been translated into idiosyncratic English by Fallaci herself. (She has had difficult relationships with translators in the past.) A third, "The Apocalypse," was recently published in Europe, in a volume that also includes a lengthy self-interview. She writes that Muslim immigration is turning Europe into "a colony of Islam," an abject place that she calls "Eurabia," which will soon "end up with minarets in place of the bell-towers, with the burka in place of the mini-skirt." Fallaci argues that Islam has always had designs on Europe, invoking the siege of Constantinople in the seventh century, and the brutal incursions of the Ottoman Empire in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. She contends that contemporary immigration from Muslim countries to Europe amounts to the same thing—invasion—only this time with "children and boats" instead of "troops and cannons." And, as Fallaci sees it, the "art of invading and conquering and subjugating" is "the only art at which the sons of Allah have always excelled." Italy, unlike America, has never been a melting pot, or a "mosaic of diversities glued together by a citizenship. Because our cultural identity has been well defined for thousands of years we cannot bear a migratory wave of people who have nothing to do with us . . . who, on the contrary, aim to absorb us." Muslim immigrants—with their burkas, their chadors, their separate schools—have no desire to assimilate, she believes. And European leaders, in their muddleheaded multiculturalism, have made absurd accommodations to them: allowing Muslim women to be photographed for identity documents with their heads covered; looking the other way when Muslim men violate the law by taking multiple wives or defend the abuse of women on supposedly Islamic grounds. (European governments are, in fact, hardening on these matters: France recently deported a Muslim cleric in Lyons who advocated wife-beating and the stoning of adulterous women.)

According to Fallaci, Europeans, particularly those on the political left, subject people who criticize Muslim customs to a double standard. "If you speak your mind on the Vatican, on the Catholic Church, on the Pope, on the Virgin Mary or Jesus or the saints, nobody touches your 'right of thought and expression.' But if you do the same with Islam, the Koran, the Prophet Muhammad, some son of Allah, you are called a xenophobic blasphemer who has committed an act of racial discrimination. If you kick the ass of a Chinese or an Eskimo or a Norwegian who has hissed at you an obscenity, nothing happens. On the contrary, you get a 'Well done, good for you.' But if under the same circumstances you kick the ass of an Algerian or a Moroccan or a Nigerian or a Sudanese, you get lynched." The rhetoric of Fallaci's trilogy is intentionally intemperate and frequently offensive: in the first volume, she writes that Muslims "breed like rats"; in the second, she writes that this statement was "a little brutal" but "indisputably accurate." She ascribes behavior to bloodlines—Spain, she writes, has been overly acquiescent to Muslim immigrants because "too many Spaniards still have the Koran in the blood"—and her political views are often expressed in the language of disgust. Images of soiling recur in the books: at one point in "The Rage and the Pride" she complains about Somali Muslims leaving "yellow streaks of urine that profaned the millenary marbles of the Baptistery" in Florence. "Good Heavens!" she writes. "They really take long shots, these sons of Allah! How could they succeed in hitting so well that target protected by a balcony and more than two yards distant from their urinary apparatus?" Six pages later, she describes urine streaks in the Piazza San Marco, in Venice, and wonders if Muslim men will one day "shit in the Sistine Chapel."

These books have brought Fallaci, who will turn seventy-seven later this month, and who has had cancer for more than a decade, to a strange place in her life. Much of the Italian intelligentsia now shuns her. (The German press has been highly critical, too.) A 2003 article in the left-wing newspaper *La Repubblica* called her "*ignorantissima*," an "exhibitionist posing as the Joan of Arc of the West." A fashionable gallery in Milan recently showed a large portrait of her—beheaded. After the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* published the long article that became "The Rage and the Pride," *La Repubblica* ran a reply from Umberto Eco, which did not mention Fallaci by name but denounced cultural chauvinism and called for tolerance. "We are a pluralistic society because we permit mosques to be built in our own home, and we cannot give this up just because in Kabul they put evangelical Christians in jail," he wrote. "If we did, we would become Taliban ourselves."



Fallaci has repeatedly fallen afoul of some of Europe's strict laws against vilifying religions or inciting racial hatred. (In Europe, the prevailing impulse toward certain kinds of outré opinions is to ban their expression.) In 2002, a French group, Movement Against Racism and for Friendship Between Peoples, tried unsuccessfully to get "The Rage and the Pride" banned. The following year, Swiss officials, under pressure from Muslim groups in that country, asked that she be extradited for trial; the Italian Minister of Justice refused the request. And she currently faces trial in Italy, on charges that amount to blasphemy, of all things. Last year, Adel Smith, a convert to Islam who heads a group called the Muslim Union of Italy, and who had previously sued the government to have a crucifix removed from his sons' classroom, persuaded a judge in Bergamo to allow him to charge Fallaci with defaming Islam. A Mussolini-era criminal code holds that "whoever offends the state's religion, by defaming those who profess it, will be punished with up to two years of imprisonment." Though the code was written to protect the Catholic Church, it has been successively amended in the past ten years, so that it encompasses any "religion acknowledged by the state." The complaint against Fallaci marks the first time that the code has been invoked on behalf of any religion but Catholicism. (In January, Fallaci's supporters in the Italian Senate pushed through an amendment to the code, reducing the maximum penalty to five thousand euros.)

Yet Fallaci's recent books, and the specious trial that she is facing as a result—her books may offend, but it is no less offensive to prosecute her for them—have also made her a beloved figure to many Europeans. The books have been best-sellers in Italy; together they have sold four million copies. To her admirers, she is an aging Cassandra, summoning her strength for one final prophecy. In September, she had a private audience with Pope Benedict XVI at Castel Gandolfo, his summer residence outside Rome. She had criticized John Paul II for making overtures to Muslims, and for not condemning terrorism heartily enough, but she has hopes for Joseph Ratzinger. (The meeting was something of a scandal in Italy, since Fallaci has always said that she is an atheist; more recently, she has called herself a "Christian atheist," out of respect for Italy's Catholic tradition.) Last December, the Italian government presented her with a gold medal for "cultural achievement."

Fallaci's arguments appeal to many Europeans on a visceral level. The murder of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, the "honor killings" of young women in England and Sweden, and the controversy in France over whether girls may wear head scarves to school have underscored the enormous clash in values between secular Europeans and fundamentalist Muslim immigrants. In Holland, immigration officials have begun showing potential immigrants films and brochures that detail certain "European" values, including equality of the sexes and tolerance of homosexuality. The implicit suggestion is that in order to live in Europe you must accept these ideas. Such clumsy efforts betray the frustration and confusion that many Europeans have felt since the riots that broke out in the suburbs of Paris last fall—perhaps the most spectacular sign that the assimilation of Western Europe's fifteen million Muslims has stalled in many places, and never started in others.

Some European intellectuals have given Fallaci credit for offering an enraged, articulate voice to people who are genuinely bewildered and dismayed by the challenges of assimilating Islamic immigrants. In 2002, writing in the Italian weekly *Panorama*, Lucia Annunziata, a former foreign correspondent and columnist, and Carlo Rossella, then the magazine's editor, argued that "The Rage and the Pride" had "redefined Italy's conception of the current conflict between the Western world and the Islamic world. . . . Oriana Fallaci has confronted the issue with ironclad simplicity: We are different, she has said. And, at this point, we are incompatible." The French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut, writing in *Le Point*, said that Fallaci "went too far," reducing all "Sons of Allah to their worst elements," yet he commended her for taking "the discourse and the actions of our adversaries" at their word and—in the wake of September 11th, the execution of Daniel Pearl, the destruction of Buddhas in Afghanistan, and other atrocities committed in the name of Islam—not being intimidated by the "penitential narcissism that makes the West guilty of even that which victimizes it."

Last year, a support committee for Fallaci collected some letters that it had received from people across Italy and presented them as a testimonial to her. A Florentine couple wrote, "*Brava*, Oriana. You had the courage and the pride to speak in the name of most Italians (who are perhaps too silent) who still have not sold out the social, moral, and religious values that belong to us. . . . If [immigrants] do not share our ideas, then why do they come to Italy? Why should we endure arrogance and interference by those who have no desire to integrate into our system and who are darkened by anti-Western hatred? We welcome them as guests, but immediately they act like the owners." Another fan wrote, "In this tragic and historic moment, only one voice has been raised high to speak for the conscience of most Westerners. . . . That is why we are impotently witnessing the breakdown and decline of a civilization whose values are now ridiculed by those who are in charge of protecting them. . . . Thank you, Oriana."

Fallaci owns an apartment in Florence and has an estate in the Tuscan countryside. But she spends most of the year in New York, where she leads a fairly solitary life and, necessarily, spends a lot of time visiting doctors. In November, when she delivered an acceptance speech for an award given by the conservative Center for the Study of Popular Culture, it was a rare public appearance.

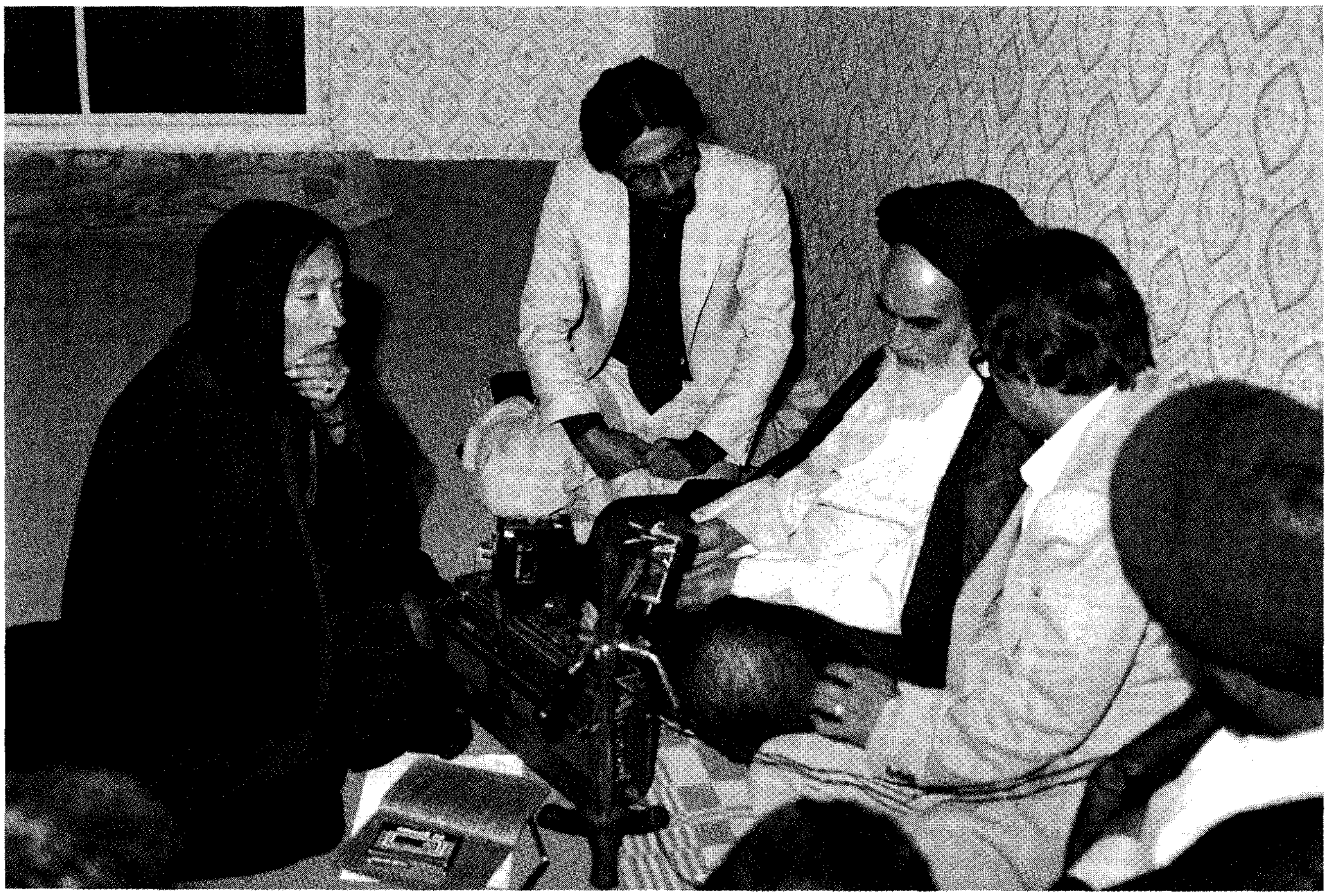
"Darling," she growled over the phone the first time we spoke, "as you well know, I never *give* interviews." Strictly speaking, this isn't true. Over the years, she's given many of them, sometimes with embarrassing results—in Scheer's 1981 *Playboy* interview, she complained about homosexuals who "swagger and strut and wag their tails" and "fat" women reporters who didn't like her. When I visited her on a rainy Saturday afternoon in April, and again the next day, I found her voluble and dramatic, capable of leaping to her feet to illustrate a point, and shouting when she felt the point warranted it—which was often. She smoked little brown Nat Sherman cigarettes; smoking, she believes, "disinfects" her.

Fallaci's New York residence is a handsome nineteenth-century brownstone, painted white, with a walled garden in the back. She had longed for such a house since childhood; as a young girl in Italy during the Second World War, she'd found a *Collier's* magazine in a care package dropped by U.S. military pilots, and fallen in love with a photo essay about American houses. "It's funny to say that, with the marvellous architecture we have in Italy, I desired a house like this," she said. "I grew up with this obsession of a white house with a black door." Inside, the second-floor rooms, where we talked, had a scholarly, slightly worn elegance. The bookshelves held translations of Fallaci's books and leather-bound early editions of Dickens, Voltaire, and Shakespeare. There were eighteenth- and nineteenth-century oil paintings on the walls; an old-fashioned cream-colored dial phone sat on a small table with a stained-glass lamp. It was the sort of setting where you could imagine retired professors sipping port and sparring genially over Greek participles. It was not the sort of setting where you expected to find a woman of Fallaci's age yelling "*Mamma mia!*" and threatening to break various people's heads and blow things up.

We sat down next to a table piled with newspaper clippings from Italy, which chronicled Fallaci's anti-Islamic crusade: articles by her and articles about her, often on the front page. The Italian press is, as she puts it, "ob-*sess*-ed" with her. One article, "Reading Oriana in Tehran," which had run in *La Stampa*, claimed that Fallaci was a legend among independent-minded women in Iran. "That's damn good!" she said. Fallaci's earlier books are widely available in Iran, but the trilogy has been banned. "You know what these women did?" she said. "They got copies in English and in French, and they photocopied them, chapter by chapter, and distributed them to others. They can go to jail for that." The reporter for *La Stampa* had mainly found women who admired Fallaci for her earlier work: two female university students noted that Fallaci had been equally tough on the Shah and on Khomeini, and that she'd shown up to get her Iranian visa wearing nail polish and jeans.

On the day I visited, Fallaci was dressed like a refined European lady: tweed skirt, leaf-green sweater, handsome antique jewelry, suède pumps. She wore her hair tied neatly at the nape of her neck rather than long and loose, as she used to, but she still looked beautiful—she has a perfect oval face and robust cheekbones. She put on a pair of jewel-rimmed reading glasses as she brandished another clipping, and said with satisfaction, "Ah, this is the scandal!" The conservative newspaper *Libero* had campaigned, unsuccessfully, for Fallaci to be made a Senator for Life, an honor conferred by the Italian President. According to the paper, the outgoing President, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, had considered giving Fallaci the title, but lost his nerve. "To me, in a sense, it was a relief," Fallaci said. "I didn't want to be Senator for Life, and stay in Rome. I would not know where to sit." She hopped up to demonstrate, pointing to the left and the right sides of an imaginary aisle—she belonged to no political side. Nevertheless, with evident delight, she noted that Ciampi's "wife was infuriated at him" for the decision. "For some time, she didn't speak to him. Three days after Christmas, she managed to have me receive a bouquet of white flowers. That was cute."

I visited Fallaci on the day before the Italian election, in which Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi was defeated by the center-left candidate, Romano Prodi. Fallaci told me that she had not sent in an absentee ballot. She loved referenda: "Do you want the hunter to go hunting under your window? No! Do you want the Koran in your schools? No!" "No" was something Fallaci was happy to say. But Berlusconi and Prodi were "two fucking idiots," she said. "Why do the people humiliate themselves by voting? I didn't vote. No! Because I have dignity. . . . If, at a certain moment, I had closed my nose and voted for one of them, I would spit on my own face."



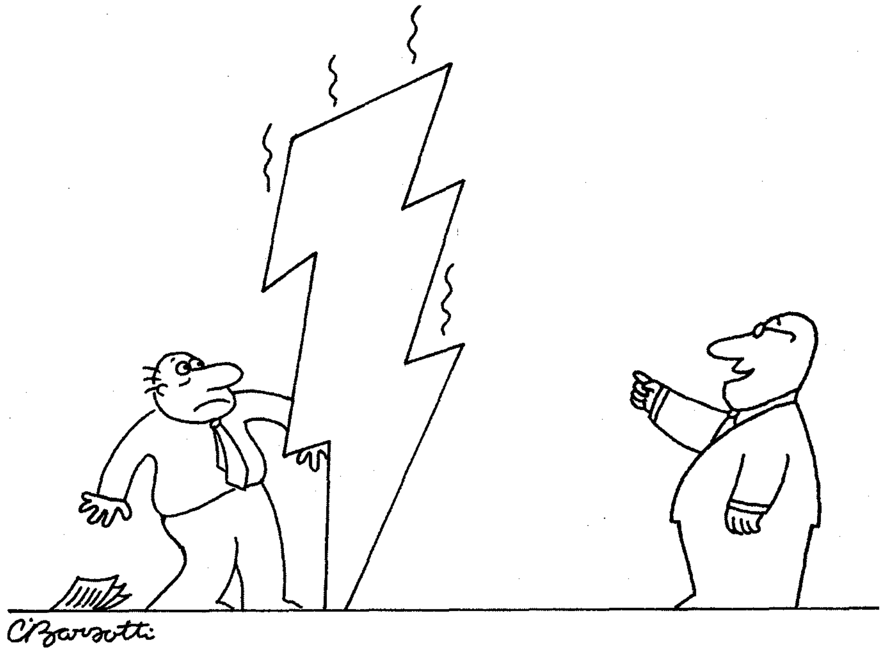
Fallaci in 1979, interviewing Ayatollah Khomeini, whom she calls "the most handsome old man I had ever met in my life."

COURTESY ORIANA FALLACI

Many of the clippings on Fallaci's table focussed on Adel Smith's lawsuit against her. She said that she would not attend the trial, which is scheduled for later this month. Although she is no longer at risk of incarceration, she invoked the possibility. "Because, you know, I am a danger to myself if I get angry," she said. "If they were thinking to give me three years in jail, I will say or do something for which they give me *nine* years! I am capable of everything if I get angry."

I'd always thought of Fallaci as an icon of the nineteen-sixties—one of those women who had lived an emancipated life without ever calling herself a feminist, an insouciant heroine out of "The Golden Notebook" or "Bonjour Tristesse." She denigrated marriage, got thrown out of nice restaurants for wearing slacks, and hung out with Anna Magnani and Ingrid Bergman. Her autobiographical novel "Letter to a Child Never Born" (1975) was a free woman's despairing confession of ambivalence about bearing a child. "A Man" (1979) was a fictional tribute to her great love, the Greek resistance fighter Alexandros Panagoulis, who died in a suspicious automobile accident in Athens three years after they met. Panagoulis had been imprisoned, and endured torture, for his failed attempt on the life of the Greek junta leader George Papadopoulos, in 1968. "I didn't want to kill a man," he told Fallaci in an interview. "I'm not capable of killing a man. I wanted to kill a tyrant." As a political prisoner, Panagoulis was defiant toward his captors and wrote poetry in his own blood; Fallaci considered him a model of what it is to be a man. I thought of her as a product of that heady time when big and bloody political matters were still at stake in Europe (dictators ruled Spain, Portugal, and Greece), but small, sophisticated cultural rebellions (movies, hair styles, poetic manifestos) made life chic and interesting. There's some truth to this image, but Fallaci's sensibility is a product less of the sixties than of the forties, and the struggle against Fascism in the Second World War.

Fallaci was born in Florence in 1929, to a family with a long history of rebellion. Her mother, Tosca, she said, was the orphaned daughter of an anarchist—"and I tell you those were people with balls! With balls! And they were the first ones to be executed." On both sides of her family, she said, she had relatives who fought for the Risorgimento—"people who were always in jail." Fallaci was an avid reader as a child (her parents lived modestly but splurged on books), and a favorite author was Jack London. His tales of brave acts in the face of savage nature inspired her to become a writer. She describes her father, Edoardo—a craftsman who became a leader in the anti-Fascist movement in Tuscany, and who served time in prison for it—as a sweet man. "Heroes can be sweet," she said, adding that Panagoulis had been that way, too. But both of Fallaci's parents prized courage and toughness in their three daughters. In "The Rage and the Pride," she tells a story about the Allied bombardment of Florence on September 25, 1943. She and her family took refuge in a church as the bombs began to fall. The walls were shaking—the priest cried out, "Help us, Jesus!"—and Oriana, who was the eldest, at fourteen, began to cry. "In a silent, composed way, mind you," she writes. "No moans, no hiccups. But Father noticed it all the same, and, in order to help me, to calm me down, poor Father, he did the wrong thing. He gave me a powerful slap—he stared me in the eyes and said, 'A girl does not, must not, cry.' " Fallaci says that she's never cried since—not even when Panagoulis died.



"Relax, Pierson, I'm just working on my control."

As a teen-ager, Fallaci did clandestine work for the anti-Fascist underground—she had her own nom de guerre, Emilia, and she carried explosives and delivered messages. After Italy surrendered, in September, 1943, and American and British prisoners began escaping from prison camps, one of her tasks was to accompany them "past the lines" and to safe refuge. Fallaci was chosen because she wore her hair in pigtails and looked deceptively innocent. "It was so scary, because there were minefields, and you never knew where the mines were," she recalled. "When my mother read that in a book later, she said, to my father, 'You would have sacrificed newly born children! You and your ideas.' And then she said, 'Well, but I had a feeling you were doing something like that.' "

Fallaci's parents looked upon the Americans as their particular friends, and when she was in high school they insisted that she learn English when her classmates were studying French. It was the beginning of a lifelong affinity for America, even when, as during the Vietnam War, she was sharply critical of its policies. "In my old age, I have been thinking about this, and I have reached the conclusion that those who have physical courage also have moral courage," she said. "Physical courage is a great test." She added, "I know I have courage. But I'm not alone. My sister Neera was like me. And my second sister, Paola, too. It came from the education my parents gave us."

She proudly told a story about her mother, which, like other recollections, sounded as if it might have been polished over time. "When my father was arrested, we didn't know where they had him, so she went everywhere for two days and finally she found him, at the house of torture. It was called Villa Triste. They killed people there. And the Fascist major was named Mario Carità—Major Charity. Mother—I don't know how she did it—she went to the office of Major Charity, passing a room that was full of blood on the floor, the blood of three men who had been arrested and tied together, and one of them was my father. Carità says, 'Madam. I have no time to lose. Your husband will be executed tomorrow morning at six. You can dress in black.' My mother got up—and I always imagine the scene this way, as if she were the Statue of Liberty—and my mother said, 'Mario Carità, tomorrow morning I shall dress in black, like you said. But if you are born from the womb of a woman, ask your mother to do the same, because your day will come very soon.' You could think for a year before you came up with something like that—to her, it came." Her mother was pregnant at the time, Fallaci went on. "She mounted on her bicycle, and all at once she had pains so terrible. She entered into a beautiful building and, in the atrium, she lost the child. She put it in, I don't know, a handkerchief or something. She mounted the bicycle again. She rode home. I opened the door, and there was mother, as pale as snow. And before she entered she said, 'Father will be executed tomorrow morning at six, and Elena'—that was the name she had given the baby—'is dead.' *No* tears." In the end, Edoardo Fallaci was spared, though he spent additional time in jail. Fallaci's sister Neera became a writer, and died of cancer; Paola is a perfectionist gardener—imagine a cross between Martha Stewart and Oriana—who raises prize-quality chickens on Fallaci's property in rural Tuscany.

"You remind me so much of my next husband."

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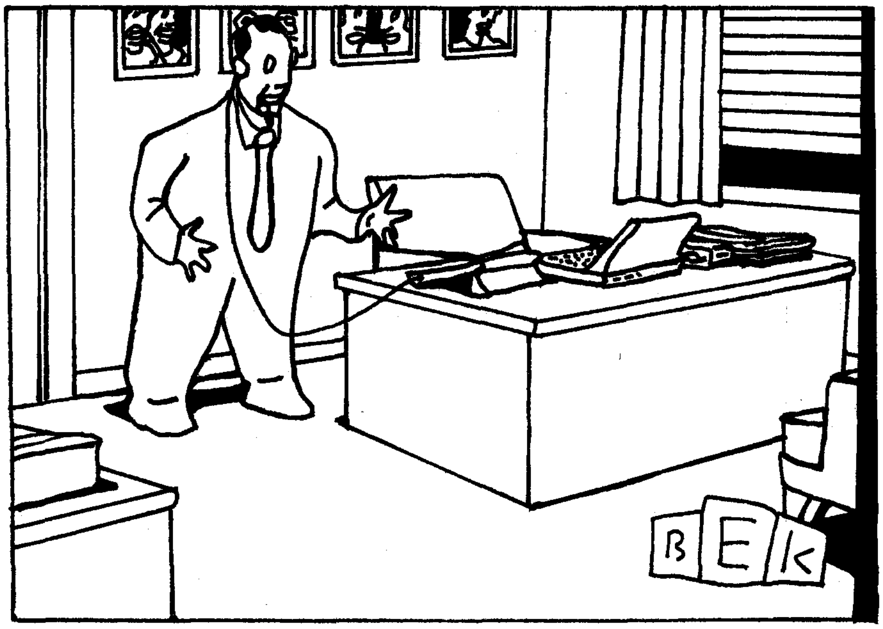
Fallaci sees the threat of Islamic fundamentalism as a revival of the Fascism that she and her sisters grew up fighting. She told me, "I am convinced that the situation is politically substantially the same as in 1938, with the pact in Munich, when England and France did not understand a thing. With the Muslims, we have done the same thing." She elaborated, in an e-mail, "Look at the Muslims: in Europe they go on with their chadors and their burkas and their djellabahs. They go on with the habits preached by the Koran, they go on with mistreating their wives and daughters. They refuse our culture, in short, and try to impose their culture, or so-called culture, on us. . . . I reject them, and this is not only my duty toward my culture. Toward my values, my principles, my civilization. It is not only my duty toward my Christian roots. It is my duty toward freedom and toward the freedom fighter I am since I was a little girl fighting as a partisan against Nazi-Fascism. Islamism is the new Nazi-Fascism. With Nazi-Fascism, *no compromise* is possible. No hypocritical tolerance. And those who do not understand this simple reality are feeding the suicide of the West."

Fallaci refuses to recognize the limitations of this metaphor—say, the fact that Muslim immigration is not the same as an annexation by another state. And although European countries should indeed refuse to countenance certain cultural practices—polygamy, "honor killings," and anti-Semitic teachings, for example—Fallaci tends to portray the worst practices of Islamic fundamentalists as representative of all Muslims. Certainly, European countries have made some foolish compromises in the name of placating Muslim residents. In Germany, where courts have ordered that Muslim religious instruction be offered in schools, just as Christian instruction is, critics have complained that the Islamic teaching often perpetuates a conservative version of Islam. The result, the historian Bernard Lewis argued, in a recent talk in Washington, is that "Islam as taught in Turkish schools is a sort of modernized, semi-secularized version of Islam, and Islam as taught in German schools is the full Wahhabi blast." (This is a good reminder of why the American model of keeping religious instruction out of public schools facilitates assimilation.) Many of Fallaci's objections, however, have more to do with her aesthetic sensibilities. For her, hearing Muslim prayers in Tuscany—she does her own wailing imitation—is a form of oppression. Yet such examples do not rise to the level of argument that she wants to make, which is that the native culture of Italy will collapse if Muslims keep immigrating.

"They live at our expense, because they've got schools, hospitals, everything," she said at one point, beginning to shout. "And they want to build damn mosques everywhere." She spoke of a new mosque and Islamic center planned for Colle di Val d'Elsa, near Siena. She vowed that it would not remain standing. "If I'm alive, I will go to my friends in Carrara—you know, where there is the marble. They are all anarchists. With them, I take the explosives. I make you *juuump* in the air. I blow it up! With the anarchists of Carrara. I *do not want* to see this mosque—it's very near my house in Tuscany. I do not want to see a twenty-four-metre minaret in the landscape of Giotto. When I cannot even wear a cross or carry a Bible in *their* country! So I BLOW IT UP!"

The magnificently rebellious Oriana Fallaci now cultivates, it seems, the prejudices of the petite bourgeoisie. She is opposed to abortion, unless she "were raped and made pregnant by a bin Laden or a Zarqawi." She is fiercely opposed to gay marriage ("In the same way that the Muslims would like us all to become Muslims, they would like us all to become homosexuals"), and suspicious of immigration in general. The demonstrations by



"I want you to meet these guys—they've got the hottest new stupid thing on the Internet."

immigrants in the United States these past few months "disgust" her, especially when protesters displayed the Mexican flag. "I don't love the Mexicans," Fallaci said, invoking her nasty treatment at the hands of Mexican police in 1968. "If you hold a gun and say, 'Choose who is worse between the Muslims and the Mexicans,' I have a moment of hesitation. Then I choose the Muslims, because they have broken my balls."

In "The Rage and the Pride," Fallaci portrays the attacks of September 11th as a thunderclap that woke her from a quiet, novel-writing existence and transformed her, almost unwillingly, into an anti-Islamic rebel. But Fallaci's distaste for Islam goes way back. Reasonable worries about the rise of Muslim fundamentalism were combined with a visceral revulsion and the need for a new enemy, in the post-Fascist, post-Communist world. Her interviews with Yasir Arafat (whom she loathed), Qaddafi (whom she also loathed), and even Muhammad Ali (whom she walked out on, she says, after he belched in her face) all fuelled her antipathy toward the Muslim world. So did her experiences in Beirut during its disintegration, in the nineteen-eighties—the basis for her 1990 novel, "Inshallah."

I started wondering if Fallaci would tolerate any Muslim immigration, or any mosque in Europe, so I asked her these questions by e-mail, and she sent back lengthy replies. "The tolerance level was already surpassed fifteen or twenty years ago," she wrote, "when the Left let the Muslims disembark on our coasts by the thousands. And it is well known . . . that I do not accept the mendacity of the so-called Moderate Islam. I do not believe that a Good Islam and a Bad Islam exist. Only Islam exists. And Islam is the Koran. And the Koran says what it says. Whatever its version. Of course there are exceptions. Also, considering the mathematical calculation of probabilities, some good Muslims must exist. I mean Muslims who appreciate freedom and democracy and secularism. But, as I say in the 'Apocalypse,' . . . good Muslims are few. So tragically few, in fact, that they must go around with bodyguards." (Here she mentioned Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the Somali-born former member of the Dutch parliament, whom Holland, shamefully, declared last month that it would strip of her citizenship, citing an irregularity in her 1997 asylum application.) She wrote that she found my question about whether she would tolerate any mosques in Europe "insidious" and "offensive," because it "aims to portray me as the bloodthirsty fanatics, who during the French Revolution beheaded even the statues of the Holy Virgin and of Jesus Christ and the Saints. Or as the equally bloodthirsty fanatics of the Bolshevik Revolution, who burned the icons and executed the clergymen and used the churches as warehouses. Really, no honest person can suggest that my ideas belong to that kind of people. I am known for a life spent in the struggle for freedom, and freedom includes the freedom of religion. But the struggle for freedom does not include the submission to a religion which, like the Muslim religion, wants to annihilate other religions. Which wants to impose its 'Mein Kampf,' its Koran, on the whole planet. Which has done so for one thousand and four hundred years. That is, since its birth. Which, unlike any other religion, slaughters and decapitates or enslaves all those who live differently."

My second meeting with Fallaci was a less inflammatory encounter. She is an excellent cook, and she made us lunch—*cotechino* sausage, polenta, mashed potatoes, and delicious little tarts with pine nuts and dried fruit—and served champagne. I'd never seen anyone approach certain kitchen tasks with such ferocity. "I must CRUSH the potatoes," she declared. At one point, we spoke about populist leaders in Latin America, and the political left's romance with them over the years; I mentioned Hugo Chávez, the President of Venezuela. "*Mamma mia! Mamma mia!*" Fallaci shouted from the kitchen. "Listen," she said more calmly. "You cannot govern, you cannot administrate, with an ignoramus." When I left, she insisted on giving me a bag of chestnut flour and dictating a recipe for a dessert that she says children love. "If you make a mistake, you spoil everything," she instructed, adding, "Get the good olive oil—not the kind they do in New Jersey."

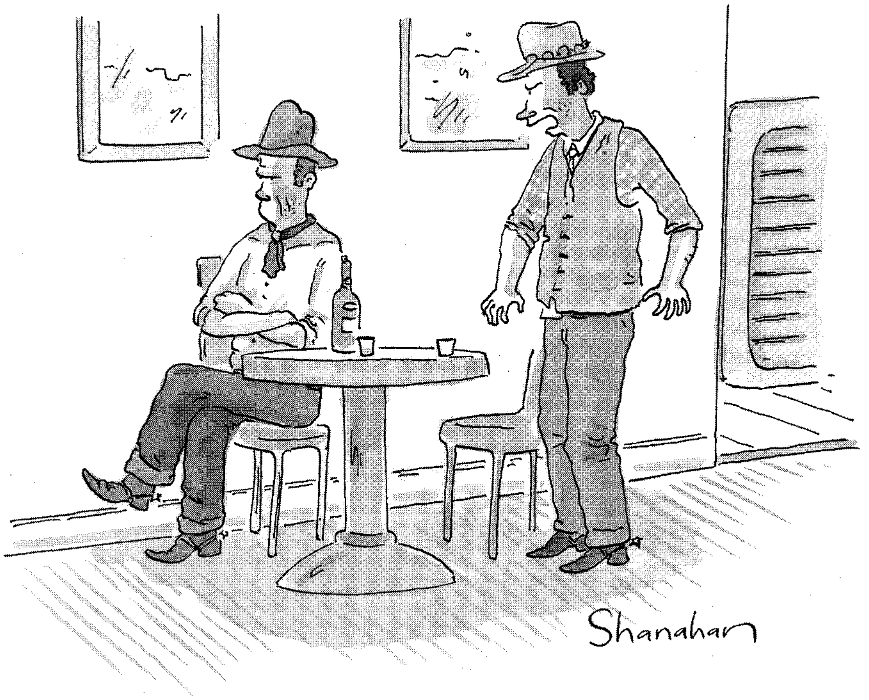
Fallaci was wearing a sweater and a skirt again that day. Late in life, she realized that skirts are more comfortable than the pants she had favored as a young woman. Besides, she wore pants when other women didn't because she was "a person who had always gone against the current," certainly since she started her writing career, at age sixteen, as a beat reporter for a Florentine newspaper. Now that everybody wore pants, what was the point? She had some evening dresses upstairs, relics from a brief period in her early thirties when she'd been a little less serious. But now they felt to her "like monuments"; where would she wear them? We talked about the historical novel that she had set aside after September 11th, when "this Islam business kidnapped me," her regrets that she's never had children, and her long illness. One of her doctors, she said, had asked her recently, "Why are you still alive?" Fallaci responded, "*Dottore*, don't do that to me. Someday I break your head." She added, "Another day, I smiled and said, 'You tell me—*you* are the doctor.' See, I got offended. 'I don't want to come here to hear about my death. Your duty is to speak to me about life, to keep me alive.' "

She surprised me with a charming story about being a young writer in New York in the nineteen-sixties. At the time, she recalled, she'd had a chance to interview Greta Garbo—a mutual friend wanted to set it up. But Fallaci admired Garbo's fierce and elegant privacy, and didn't want to pursue the matter. And then one winter evening Fallaci was shopping at the Dover Delicatessen, on Fifty-seventh Street, and Garbo happened to be there: "You couldn't *not* recognize her. She was Greta Garbo. She was dressed like Greta Garbo—with the hair, the glasses. And she was choosing chicken with extreme care. She would look at a leg and toss it back, then the breast, and so on. And I felt ashamed of myself that I was observing her. I went in the other aisle, and I remember I got a lot of things, because I wanted her to go out and not go by me." It was a rainy night and Fallaci had no umbrella. She recalled that Garbo, on her way out the door, stopped and held it open. "She said, 'Here, Miss Fallaci.' I looked like a poor, pitiful bird." They walked together, under Garbo's umbrella, to the corner of Third Avenue, and Fallaci—in a rare moment of restraint—barely said a word.

After I had interviewed Fallaci, I discovered two great examples of her journalism that I had not read before. In a witty 1963 article about Federico Fellini, Fallaci describes with wary, nervy thoroughness the many times and places that the great director kept her waiting. When she finally corners him, she begins by saying, "So then let us brace ourselves, Signor Fellini, and let us discuss Federico Fellini, just for a change. I know you find it hard: you are so withdrawing, so secretive, so modest. But it is our duty to discuss him, for the sake of the nation." She goes on in this vein until Fellini cuts her off, saying, "Nasty liar. Rude little bitch." In her introduction to the interview, she writes, "I used to be truly fond of Federico Fellini. Since our tragic encounter, I'm a lot less fond. To be exact, I'm no longer fond of him. That is, I don't like him at all. Glory is a heavy burden, a murdering poison, and to bear it is an art. And to have that art is rare." Equally absorbing, in a different way, was the section of her 1969 book, "Nothing, and So Be It," in which she describes the events of October, 1968, in Mexico City, when soldiers shot and bayonetted hundreds of anti-government protesters. Fallaci was detained with a group of students, and was ultimately shot three times. "In war, you've really got a chance sometimes, but here we had none," she writes. "The wall they'd put us up against was a place of execution; if you moved the police would execute you, if you didn't move the soldiers would kill you, and for many nights afterward I was to have this nightmare, the nightmare of a scorpion surrounded by fire, unable even to try to jump through the fire because if it did so it would be pierced through." Dragged down the stairs by her hair and left for dead, Fallaci was ultimately taken to a hospital, where she underwent surgery to remove the bullets. One of the doctors who cared for her came close and murmured, "Write all you've seen. Write it!" She did, becoming a crucial witness to a massacre that the Mexican government denied for years.

These pieces showed Fallaci in her prime. In her e-mail, however, she told me that she didn't really remember the interview with Fellini—only that she didn't like him. And her memories of Mexico City in 1968 had largely devolved into a dislike of Mexicans. Fallaci's virtues are the virtues that shine most brightly in stark circumstances: the ferocious courage, and the willingness to say anything, that can amount to a life force. But Fallaci never convinced me that Europe's encounter with immigration is that sort of circumstance.

Not that it would matter to her. "You've got to get old, because you have nothing to lose," she said over lunch that afternoon. "You have this respectability that is given to you, more or less. But you don't give a damn. It is the ne plus ultra of freedom. And things that I didn't used to say before—you know, there is in each of us a form of timidity, of cautiousness—now I open my big mouth. I say, 'What are you going to do to me? You go fuck yourself—I say what I want.' " ♦

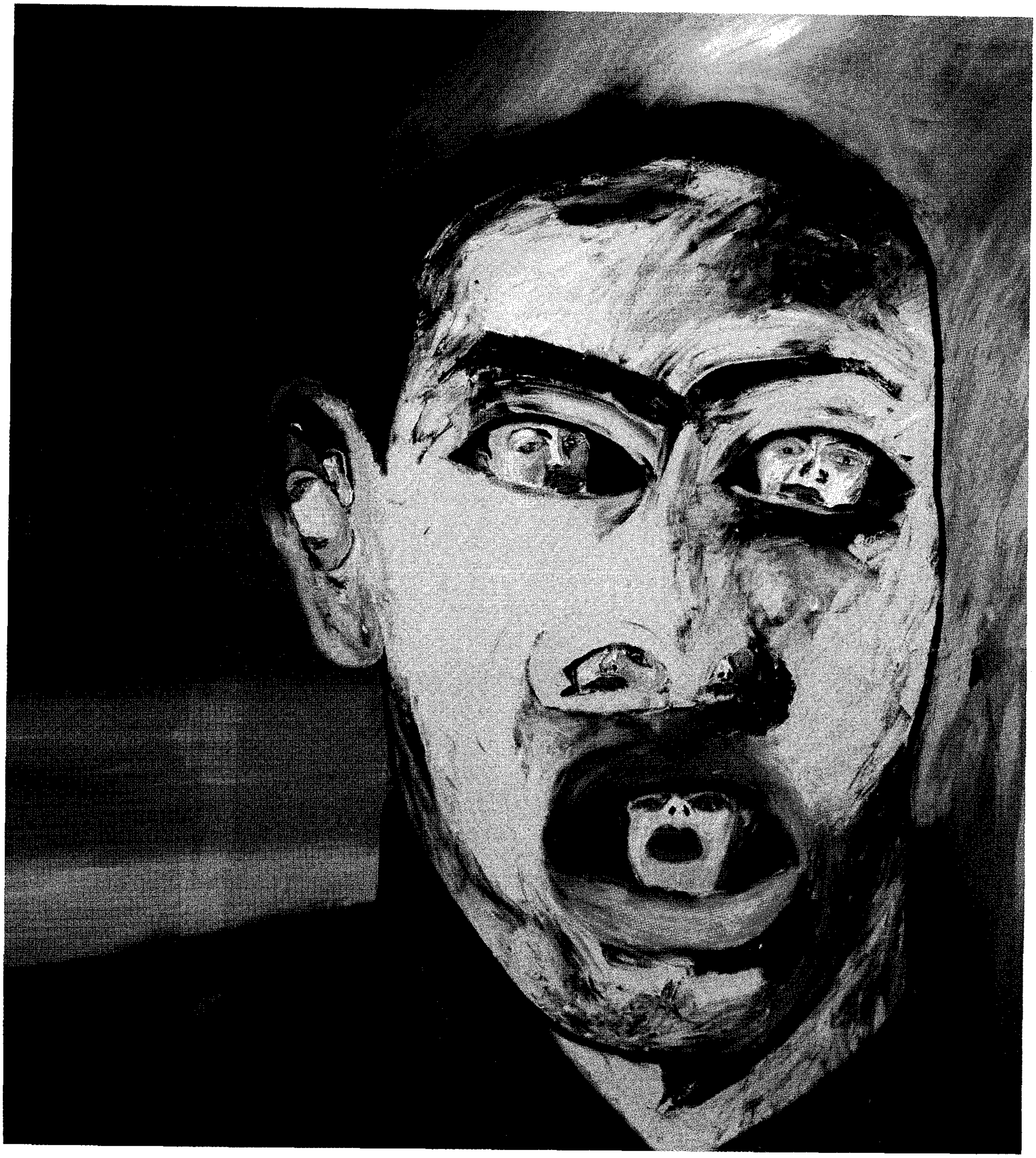


"Them's cat-fightin' words, Arlin!"

FICTION

DIMENSION

BY ALICE MUNRO



Doree had to take three buses—one to Kincardine, where she waited for one to London, where she waited again, for the city bus out to the facility. She started the trip on a Sunday at nine in the morning. Because of the waiting times between buses, it took her until about two in the afternoon to travel the hundred-odd miles. All that sitting, either on buses or in the depots, was not a thing she should have minded. Her daily work was not of the sitting-down kind.

She was a chambermaid at the Comfort Inn. She scrubbed bathrooms and stripped and made beds and vacuumed rugs and wiped mirrors. She liked the work—it occupied her thoughts to a certain extent and tired her out so that she could sleep at night. She was seldom faced with a really bad mess, though some of the women she worked with could tell stories to make your hair curl. These women were older than her, and they all thought that she should try to work her way up. They told her that she should get trained for a job behind the desk, while she was still young and decent-looking. But she was content to do what she did. She didn't want to have to talk to people.

None of the people she worked with knew what had happened. Or, if they did, they didn't let on. Her picture had been in the paper—they'd used the photo he took of her with all three kids, the new baby, Dimitri, in her arms, and Barbara Ann and Sasha on either side, looking on. Her hair had been long and wavy and brown then, natural in curl and color, as he liked it, and her face bashful and soft—a reflection less of the way she was than of the way he wanted to see her.

Since then, she had cut her hair short and bleached and spiked it, and she had lost a lot of weight. And she went by her second name now: Fleur. Also, the job they had found for her was in a town a good distance away from where she used to live.

This was the third time she had made the trip. The first two times he had refused to see her. If he did that again she would just quit trying. Even if he did see her, she might not come again for a while. She was not going to go overboard. She didn't really know what she was going to do.

On the first bus she was not too troubled. Just riding along and looking at the scenery. She had grown up on the coast, where there was such a thing as spring, but here winter jumped almost directly into summer. A month ago there had been snow, and now it was hot enough to go bare-armed. Dazzling patches of water lay in the fields, and the sunlight was pouring down through naked branches.

On the second bus she began to feel jittery, and she couldn't help trying to guess which of the women around her might be going to the same place. They were women alone, usually dressed with some care, maybe to make themselves look as if they were going to church. The older ones looked as if they were going to strict old-fashioned churches where you had to wear a skirt and stockings and some sort of hat, while the younger ones might have belonged to a livelier congregation, which accepted pants suits, bright scarves, earrings, and puffy hairdos. When you took a second look, you saw that some of the pants-suit women were quite as old as the others.

Doree didn't fit into either category. In the whole year and a half that she had been working she had not bought herself a single new piece of clothing. She wore her uniform at work and her jeans everywhere else. She had got out of the way of wearing makeup because he hadn't allowed it, and now, though she could have, she didn't. Her spikes of corn-colored hair didn't suit her bony bare face, but it didn't matter.

On the third bus she got a seat by the window, and tried to keep herself calm by reading the signs—both the advertising and the street signs. There was a certain trick she had picked up, to keep her mind occupied. She took the letters of whatever word her eyes lit on, and she tried to see how many new words she could make out of them. "Coffee," for instance, would give you "fee," and then "foe," and "off" and "of," and "shop" would provide "hop" and "sop" and "so" and—wait a minute—"posh." Words were more than plentiful on the way out of the city, as they passed billboards, monster stores, car lots, even balloons moored on roofs to advertise sales.

Doree had not told Mrs. Sands about her last two attempts, and probably wouldn't tell her about this one, either. Mrs. Sands, whom she saw on Monday afternoons, spoke of moving on, though she always said that it would take time, that things could not be hurried. She told Doree that she was doing fine, that she was gradually discovering her own strength.

"I know those words have been done to death," she said. "But they're still true."

She blushed at what she heard herself say—*death*—but did not make it worse by apologizing.

When Doree was sixteen—that was seven years ago—she'd gone to visit her mother in the hospital every day after school. Her mother was recovering from an operation on her back, which was said to have been serious but not dangerous. Lloyd was an orderly. He and Doree's mother had in common the fact that they were both old hippies—though Lloyd was actually a few years the younger—and whenever he had time he'd come in and chat with her about the concerts and protest marches they'd both attended, the outrageous people they'd known, drug trips that had knocked them out, that sort of thing.

Lloyd was popular with the patients, because of his jokes and his sure, strong touch. He was stocky and broad-shouldered and authoritative enough to be sometimes taken for a doctor. (Not that he was pleased by that—he held the opinion that a lot of medicine was a fraud and a lot of doctors were jerks.) He had sensitive reddish skin and light hair and bold eyes.

He kissed Doree in the elevator and told her that she was a flower in the desert. Then he laughed at himself, and said, "How original can you get?"

"You're a poet and don't know it," she said, to be kind.

One night her mother died suddenly, of an embolism. Doree's mother

DETAIL: FRANCESCO CLEMENTE, "NAME" (1983)/GAGOSIAN GALLERY

ing cheerfulness, all insult, out of those clothes.

"Well, the first two times I never saw him," Doree said. "He wouldn't come out."

"But this time he did? He did come out?"

"Yes, he did. But I wouldn't hardly have known him."

"He'd aged?"

"I guess so. I guess he's lost some weight. And those clothes. Uniforms. I never saw him in anything like that."

"Wasn't he once an orderly?"

"It wasn't the same."

"He looked to you like a different person?"

"No." Doree caught at her upper lip, trying to think what the difference was. He'd been so still. She had never seen him so still. He hadn't even seemed to know that he should sit down opposite her. Her first words to him had been "Aren't you going to sit down?" And he had said, "Is it all right?"

"He looked sort of vacant," she said. "I wondered if they had him on drugs?"

"Maybe something to keep him on an even keel. Mind you, I don't know. Did you have a conversation?"

Doree wondered if it could be called that. She had asked him some stupid ordinary questions. How was he feeling? (O.K.) Did he get enough to eat? (He thought so.) Was there any place where he could walk if he wanted to? (Under supervision, yes. He guessed you could call it a place. He guessed you could call it walking.)

She'd said, "You have to get fresh air."

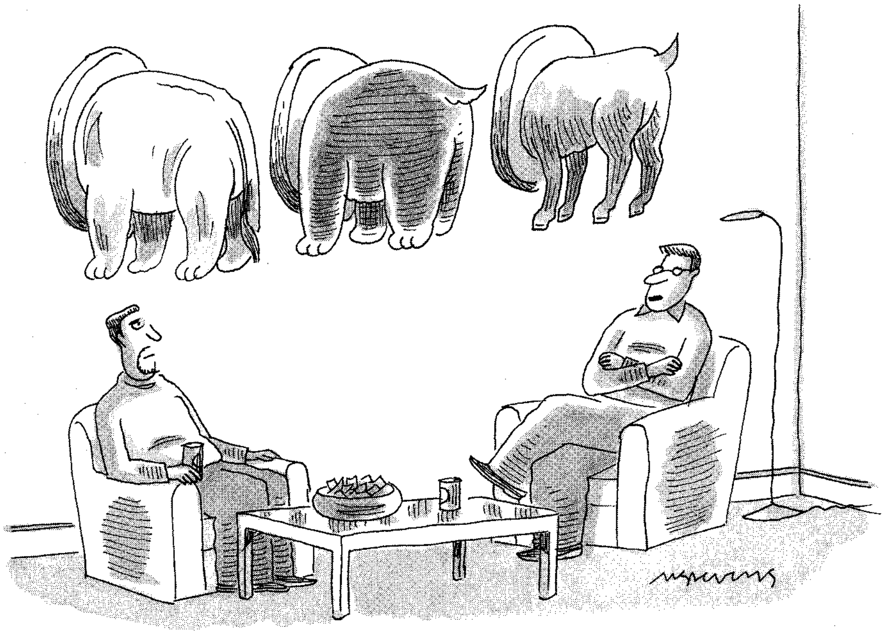
He'd said, "That's true."

She'd nearly asked him if he had made any friends. The way you ask your kid about school. The way, if your kids went to school, you would ask them.

"Yes. Yes," Mrs. Sands said, nudging the ready box of Kleenex forward. Doree didn't need it; her eyes were dry. The trouble was in the bottom of her stomach. The heaves.

Mrs. Sands just waited, knowing enough to keep her hands off.

And, as if he'd detected what she was on the verge of saying, Lloyd had told her that there was a psychiatrist who came and talked to him every so often.



"The guy in the next apartment is a big-game hunter."

•　•

had a lot of women friends who would have taken Doree in—and she stayed with one of them for a time—but the new friend Lloyd was the one Doree preferred. By her next birthday she was pregnant, then married. Lloyd had never been married before, though he had at least two children whose whereabouts he was not certain of. They would have been grown up by then, anyway. His philosophy of life had changed as he got older—he believed now in marriage, constancy, and no birth control. And he found the Sechelt Peninsula, where he and Doree lived, too full of people these days—old friends, old ways of life, old lovers. Soon he and Doree moved across the country to a town they picked from a name on the map: Mildmay. They didn't live in town; they rented a place in the country. Lloyd got a job in an ice-cream factory. They planted a garden. Lloyd knew a lot about gardening, just as he did about house carpentry, managing a woodstove, and keeping an old car running.

Sasha was born.

"Perfectly natural," Mrs. Sands said.

Doree said, "Is it?"

Doree always sat on a straight-backed chair in front of the desk, not on the sofa, which had a flowery pattern and cushions. Mrs. Sands moved her own chair to the side of the desk, so that they could talk without any kind of barrier between them.

"I've sort've been expecting you would," she said. "I think it's what I might have done, in your place."

Mrs. Sands would not have said that in the beginning. A year ago, even, she'd have been more cautious, knowing how Doree would have revolted, then, at the idea that anybody, any living soul, could be in her place. Now she knew that Doree would just take it as a way, even a humble way, of trying to understand.

Mrs. Sands was not like some of them. She was not brisk, not thin, not pretty. Not too old, either. She was about the age that Doree's mother would have been, though she did not look as if she'd ever been a hippie. Her graying hair was cut short and she had a mole riding on one cheekbone. She wore flat shoes and loose pants and flowered tops. Even when they were of a raspberry or turquoise color these tops did not make her look as if she really cared what she put on—it was more as if somebody had told her she needed to smarten herself up and she had obediently gone shopping for something she thought might do that. Her large, kind, impersonal sobriety drained all assault-

"I tell him he's wasting his time," Lloyd said. "I know as much as he does."

That was the only time that he had sounded to Doree anything like himself.

All through the visit her heart had kept thumping. She'd thought she might faint or die. It cost her such an effort to look at him, to get him into her vision as this thin and gray, diffident yet cold, mechanically moving yet uncoördinated man.

She had not said any of this to Mrs. Sands. Mrs. Sands might have asked—tactfully—whom she was afraid of. Herself or him? But she wasn't *afraid.*

When Sasha was one and a half, Barbara Ann was born, and, when Barbara Ann was two, they had Dimitri. They had named Sasha together, and then they made a pact that he would name the boys and she would name the girls.

Dimitri was the first one to be colicky. Doree thought that he was maybe not getting enough milk, or that her milk was not rich enough. Or too rich? Not right, anyway. Lloyd had a lady from the La Leche League come and talk to her. Whatever you do, the lady said, you must not put him on a supplementary bottle. That would be the thin edge of the wedge, she said, and pretty soon you would have him rejecting the breast altogether. She spoke as if that would be a major tragedy.

Little did she know that Doree had been giving him a supplement already. And it seemed to be true that he preferred that—he fussed more and more at the breast. By three months he was entirely bottle-fed, and then there was no way to keep it from Lloyd. She told him that her milk had dried up, and she'd had to start supplementing. Lloyd squeezed one breast after the other with frantic determination and succeeded in getting a couple of drops of miserable-looking milk out. He called her a liar. They fought. He said that she was a whore like her mother.

All those hippies were whores, he said.

Soon they made up. But whenever Dimitri was fretful, whenever he had a cold, or was afraid of the older children's pet rabbit, or still hung on to chairs at the age when his brother and sister had been walking unsupported, the failure to breast-feed was recalled.

The first time Doree had gone to Mrs. Sands's office, one of the other women there had given her a pamphlet. On the front of it was a gold cross and words made up of gold and purple letters: "When Your Loss Seems Unbearable . . ." Inside, there was a softly colored picture of Jesus and some finer print that Doree did not read.

In her chair in front of the desk, still clutching the pamphlet, Doree began to shake. Mrs. Sands had to pry it out of her hand.

"Did somebody give you this?" Mrs. Sands said.

Doree said, "Her," and jerked her head at the closed door.

"You don't want it?"

"When you're down is when they'll try and get at you," Doree said, and then realized that this was something her mother had said, when some ladies with a similar message came to visit her in the hospital. "They think you'll fall on your knees and then it'll be all right."

Mrs. Sands sighed.

"Well," she said. "It's certainly not that simple."

"Not even possible," Doree said.

"Maybe not."

They never spoke of Lloyd, in those days. Doree never thought of him if she could help it, and then only as if he were some terrible accident of nature.

"Even if I believed in that stuff," she said—meaning what was in the pamphlet—"it would only be so that . . ." She meant to say that such a belief would be convenient because she could then think of Lloyd burning in Hell, or something of that sort, but she was unable to go on, because it was just too stupid to talk about. And because of a familiar impediment, that was like a hammer hitting her in the belly.

Lloyd thought that their children should be educated at home. This was not for religious reasons—going against dinosaurs and cavemen and monkeys and all that—but because he wanted them to be close to their parents and to be introduced to the world carefully and gradually, rather than thrown into it all at once. "I just happen to think they are my kids," he said. "I mean they are our kids, not the Department of Education's kids."

Doree wasn't sure that she could handle this, but it turned out that the Department of Education had guidelines, and lesson plans that you could get from your local school. Sasha was a bright boy who practically taught himself to read, and the other two were still too little to learn much yet. In the evenings and on weekends Lloyd taught Sasha about geography and the solar system and the hibernation of animals and how a car runs, covering each subject as the questions came up. Pretty soon Sasha was ahead of the school plans, but Doree picked them up anyway and put him through the exercises right on time so that the law would be satisfied.

There was another mother in the district doing homeschooling. Her name was Maggie and she had a minivan. Lloyd needed his car to get to work, and Doree had not learned to drive, so she was glad when Maggie offered her a ride to the school once a week to turn in the finished exercises and pick up the new ones. Of course they took all the children along. Maggie had two boys. The older one had so many allergies that she had to keep a strict eye on everything he ate—that was why she taught him at home. And then it seemed that she might as well keep the younger one there as well. He wanted to stay with his brother and he had a problem with asthma, anyway.

How grateful Doree was then, comparing her healthy three. Lloyd said that it was because she'd had her children when she was still young, while Maggie had waited until she was on the verge of menopause. He was exaggerating how old Maggie was, but it was true that she had waited. She was an optometrist. She and her husband had been partners, and they hadn't started their family until she could leave the practice and they had a house in the country.

Maggie's hair was pepper-and-salt, cropped close to her head. She was tall, flat-chested, cheerful, and opinionated. Lloyd called her the Lezzie. Only behind her back, of course. He kidded with her on the phone but mouthed at

Doree, "It's the Lezzie." That didn't really bother Doree—he called lots of women Lezzies. But she was afraid that the kidding would seem overly friendly to Maggie, an intrusion, or at least a waste of time.

"You want to speak to the ole lady. Yeah, I got her right here. She's rubbing my work pants up and down the scrub board. See, I only got the one pair of pants. Anyway, I believe in keeping her busy."

Doree and Maggie got into the habit of shopping for groceries together, after they'd picked up the papers at the school. Then sometimes they got take-out coffees at Tim Horton's and took the children to Riverside Park. They sat on a bench while Sasha and Maggie's boys raced around or hung from the climbing contraptions, and Barbara Ann pumped on the swing and Dimitri played in the sandbox. Or they sat in the mini, if it was cold. They talked mostly about the children, and things they cooked, but somehow Doree found out about how Maggie had trekked around Europe before training as an optometrist and Maggie found out how young Doree had been when she got married. Also about how easily she had become pregnant at first, and how she didn't so easily anymore, and how that made Lloyd suspicious, so that he went through her dresser drawers looking for birth-control pills—thinking she must be taking them on the sly.

"And are you?" Maggie asked.

Doree was shocked. She said she wouldn't dare.

"I mean, I'd think that was awful to do, without telling him. It's just kind of a joke when he goes looking for them."

"Oh," Maggie said.

And one time Maggie said, "Is everything all right with you? I mean in your marriage? You're happy?"

Doree said yes, without hesitation. After that she was more careful about what she said. She saw that there were things that she was used to that another person might not understand. Lloyd had a certain way of looking at things; that was just how he was. Even when she'd first met him, in the hospital, he'd been like that. The head nurse was a starchy sort of person, so he'd called her Mrs. Bitch-out-of-hell, instead of her name, which was Mrs. Mitchell. He said it so fast that you could barely catch on. He'd thought that she picked favorites, and he wasn't one of them. Now there was somebody he detested at the ice-cream factory, somebody he called Suck-stick Louie. Doree didn't know the man's real name. But at least that proved that it wasn't only women who provoked him.

Doree was pretty sure that these people weren't as bad as Lloyd thought, but it was no use contradicting him. Perhaps men just had to have enemies, the way they had to have their jokes. And sometimes Lloyd did make the enemies into jokes, just as if he were laughing at himself. She was even allowed to laugh with him, as long as she wasn't the one who started the laughing.

She hoped that he wouldn't get that way about Maggie. At times she was afraid she saw something of the sort coming. If he prevented her from riding to the school and the grocery store with Maggie it would be a big inconvenience. But worse would be the shame. She would have to make up some stupid lie, to explain things. But Maggie would know—at least she would know that Doree was lying, and she would interpret that, probably, as meaning that Doree was in a worse situation than she really was. Maggie had her own sharp no-nonsense way of looking at things.

Then Doree asked herself why she should care, anyway, what Maggie might think. Maggie was an outsider, not even somebody Doree felt particularly comfortable with. It was Lloyd and Doree and their family that mattered. Lloyd said that, and he was right. The truth of things between them, the bond, was not something that anybody else could understand and it was not anybody else's business. If Doree could watch her own loyalty it would be all right.

It got worse, gradually. No direct forbidding, but more criticism. Lloyd coming up with the theory that Maggie's boys' allergies and asthma might be Maggie's fault. The reason was often the mother, he said. He used to see it at the hospital all the time. The overcontrolling, usually overeducated mother.

"Some of the time kids are just born with something," Doree said, unwisely. "You can't say it's the mother every time."

"Oh. Why can't I?"

"I didn't mean *you*. I didn't mean you can't. I meant couldn't they be born—"

"Since when are you such a medical authority?"

"I didn't say I was."

"No. And you're not."

Bad to worse. He wanted to know what they talked about, she and Maggie.

"I don't know. Nothing, really."

"That's funny. Two women riding in a car. First I heard of it. Two women talking about nothing. She is out to break us up."

"Who is? *Maggie*?"

"I've got experience of her kind of woman."

"What kind?"

"Her kind."

"Don't be silly."

"Careful. Don't call me silly."

"What would she want to do that for?"

"How am I supposed to know? She just wants to do it. You wait. You'll see. She'll get you over there bawling and whining about what a bastard I am."

And in fact it turned out as he had said. At least it would certainly have looked that way, to Lloyd. She did find herself at around ten o'clock one night in Maggie's kitchen, sniffling back her tears and drinking herbal tea. Maggie's husband had said, "What the hell?" when she knocked—she heard him through the door. He hadn't known who she was. She'd said, "I'm really sorry to bother you—" while he stared at her with lifted eyebrows and a tight mouth. And then Maggie had come.

Doree had walked all the way there in the dark, first along the gravel road that she and Lloyd lived on, then on the highway. She headed for the ditch every time a car came, and that slowed her down considerably. She did take a look at the cars that passed, thinking that one of them might be Lloyd. She didn't want him to find her, not yet, not till he was scared out of his craziness. Other times she had been able to scare him out of it herself, by weeping and howling and even banging her head on the floor, chanting, "It's not true, it's not true, it's not true," over and over. Finally he would back down. He would say, "O.K., O.K. I'll believe you. Honey, be quiet. Think of the kids. I'll believe you, honest. Just stop."

But tonight she had pulled herself together just as she was about to start that performance. She had put on her coat and walked out the door, with him calling after her, "Don't do this. I warn you!"

Maggie's husband had gone to bed, not looking any better pleased about things, while Doree kept saying, "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry, barging in on you at this time of the night."

"Oh, shut up," Maggie said, kind and businesslike. "Do you want a glass of wine?"

"I don't drink."

"Then you'd better not start now. I'll get you some tea. It's very soothing. Raspberry-camomile. It's not the kids, is it?"

"No."

Maggie took her coat and handed her a wad of Kleenex for her eyes and nose. "Don't try to tell me yet. We'll soon get you settled down."

Even when she was partway settled down Doree didn't want to blurt out the whole truth, and let Maggie know that she herself was at the heart of the problem. More than that, she didn't want to have to explain Lloyd. No matter how worn out she got with him, he was still the closest person in the world to her, and she felt that everything would collapse if she were to bring herself to tell someone exactly how he was, if she were to be entirely disloyal.

She said that she and Lloyd had got into an old argument and she was so sick and tired of it that all she'd wanted was to get out. But she would get over it, she said. They would.

"Happens to every couple sometime," Maggie said.

The phone rang then, and Maggie answered.

"Yes. She's O.K. She just needed to walk something out of her system. Fine. O.K. then, I'll deliver her home in the morning. No trouble. O.K. Good night.

"That was him," she said. "I guess you heard."

"How did he sound? Did he sound normal?"

Maggie laughed. "Well, I don't know how he sounds when he's normal, do I? He didn't sound drunk."

"He doesn't drink, either. We don't even have coffee in the house."

"Want some toast?"

In the morning, early, Maggie drove her home. Maggie's husband hadn't left for work yet, and he stayed with the boys.

Maggie was in a hurry to get back, so she just said, "Bye-bye. Phone me if you need to talk," as she turned the minivan around in the yard.

It was a cold morning in early spring, snow still on the ground, but there was Lloyd sitting on the steps without a jacket on.

"Good morning," he said, in a loud, sarcastically polite voice. And she said good morning, in a voice that pretended not to notice his.

He did not move aside to let her up the steps.

"You can't go in there," he said.

She decided to take this lightly.

"Not even if I say please? Please."

He looked at her but did not answer. He smiled with his lips held together.

"Lloyd?" she said. "Lloyd?"

"You better not go in."

"I didn't tell her anything, Lloyd. I'm sorry I walked out. I just needed a breathing space, I guess."

"Better not go in."

"What's the matter with you? Where are the kids?"

He shook his head, as he did when she said something he didn't like to hear. Something mildly rude, like "holy shit."

"*Lloyd.* Where are the kids?"

He shifted just a little, so that she could pass if she liked.

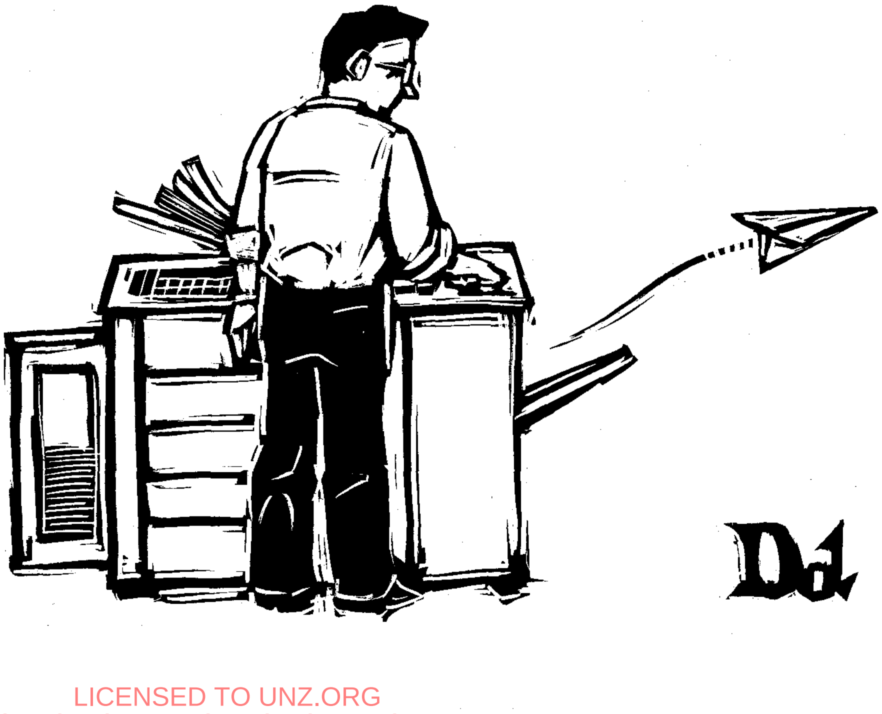
Dimitri still in his crib, lying sideways. Barbara Ann on the floor beside her bed, as if she'd got out or been pulled out. Sasha by the kitchen door—he had tried to get away. He was the only one with bruises on his throat. The pillow had done for the others.

"When I phoned last night?" Lloyd said. "When I phoned, it had already happened.

"You brought it all on yourself," he said.

The verdict was that he was insane, he couldn't be tried. He was criminally insane—he had to be put in a secure institution.

Doree had run out of the house and was stumbling around the yard, holding her arms tight across her stomach as if she had been sliced open and was trying to keep herself together. This was the scene that Maggie saw, when she came back. She had had a premonition, and had turned the minivan around in the road. Her first thought



was that Doree had been hit or kicked in the stomach by her husband. She could make nothing out of the noises Doree was making. But Lloyd, who was still sitting on the steps, moved aside courteously for her, without a word, and she went into the house and found what she was now expecting to find. She phoned the police.

For some time Doree kept stuffing whatever she could grab into her mouth. After the dirt and grass it was sheets or towels or her own clothing. As if she were trying to stifle not just the howls that rose up but the scene in her head. She was given a shot of something, regularly, to quiet her down, and this worked. In fact she became very quiet, though not catatonic. She was said to be stabilized. When she got out of the hospital and the social worker brought her to this new place, Mrs. Sands took over, found her somewhere to live, found her a job, established the routine of talking with her once a week. Maggie would have come to see her, but she was the one person Doree could not stand to see. Mrs. Sands said that that feeling was natural—it was the association. She said that Maggie would understand.

Mrs. Sands said that whether or not Doree continued to visit Lloyd was up to her. "I'm not here to approve or disapprove, you know. Did it make you feel good to see him? Or bad?"

"I don't know."

Doree could not explain that it had not really seemed to be him she was seeing. It was almost like seeing a ghost. So pale. Pale loose clothes on him, shoes that didn't make any noise—probably slippers—on his feet. She had the impression that some of his hair had fallen out. His thick and wavy, honey-colored hair. There seemed to be no breadth to his shoulders, no hollow in his collarbone where she used to rest her head.

What he had said, afterward, to the police—and it was quoted in the newspapers—was "I did it to save them the misery."

What misery?

"The misery of knowing that their mother had walked out on them," he said.

That was burned into Doree's brain and maybe when she decided to try to see him it had been with the idea of making him take it back. Making him see, and admit, how things had really gone.

"You told me to stop contradicting you or get out of the house. So I got out of the house."

"I only went to Maggie's for one night. I fully intended to come back. I wasn't walking out on anybody."

She remembered perfectly how the argument had started. She had bought a tin of spaghetti that had a very slight dent in it. Because of that it had been on sale and she had been pleased with her thriftiness. She had thought that she was doing something smart. But she didn't tell him that, once he had begun questioning her about it. For some reason she'd thought it better to pretend that she hadn't noticed.

Anybody would notice, he said. We could have all been poisoned. What was the matter with her? Or was that what she had in mind? Was she planning to try it out on the kids or on him?

She had told him not to be crazy.

He had said that it wasn't him who was crazy. Who but a crazy woman would buy poison for her family?

The children had been watching from the doorway of the front room. That was the last time she'd seen them alive.

So was that what she had been thinking—that she could make him see, finally, who it was that was crazy?

When she realized what was in her head, she should have got off the bus. She could have got off even at the gates, with the few other women who plodded up the drive. She could have crossed the road and waited for the bus back to the city. Probably some people did that. They were going to make a visit and then decided not to. People probably did that all the time.

But maybe it was better that she had gone on, and seen him so strange and wasted. Not a person worth blaming for anything. Not a person. He was like a character in a dream.

She had dreams. In one dream she had run out of the house after finding them, and Lloyd had started to laugh in his old easy way, and then she had heard Sasha laughing behind her and it had dawned on her, wonderfully, that they were all playing a joke.

"You asked me if it made me feel good or bad when I saw him? Last time, you asked me?"

"Yes, I did," Mrs. Sands said.

"I had to think about it."

"Yes."

"I decided it made me feel bad. So I haven't gone again."

It was hard to tell with Mrs. Sands, but the nod she gave seemed to show some satisfaction or approval.

So when Doree decided that she would go again, after all, she thought that it was better not to mention it. And since it was hard not to mention whatever happened to her—there being so little, most of the time—she phoned and cancelled her appointment. She said that she was going on

ON THE TERRACE

The lonely breakfast table starts the day,
an adjustment is made to understand
why the other chair is empty. The morning
beautiful and still to be, should woo me. Yet
the appetite is not shared, lost somewhere in memory.

How lucky the horizon is blue and needs
no handwriting on its emptiness. I am
written on thoroughly, a lost novel
found again. I remember the predictable plot too late,
realize the silly, sad urgency of moss.

—*Landis Everson*

a holiday. They were getting into summer, when holidays were the usual thing. With a friend, she said.

"You aren't wearing the jacket you had on last week."

"That wasn't last week."

"Wasn't it?"

"It was three weeks ago. The weather's hot now. This is lighter but I don't really need it. You don't need a jacket at all."

He asked about her trip, what buses she'd had to take from Mildmay.

She told him that she wasn't living there anymore. She told him where she lived, and about the three buses.

"That's quite a trek for you. Do you like living in a bigger place?"

"It's easier to get work there."

"So you work?"

She had told him last time about where she lived, the buses, where she worked.

"I clean rooms in a motel," she said. "I told you."

"Yes. Yes. I forgot. I'm sorry. Do you ever think about going back to school? Night school?"

She said that she did think about it but never seriously enough to do anything. She said that she didn't mind the work she was doing.

Then it seemed as if they could not think of anything more to say.

He sighed. He said, "Sorry. Sorry. I guess I'm not so used to conversation."

"So what do you do all the time?"

"I guess I read quite a bit. Kind of meditate. Informally."

"Oh."

"I appreciate you coming here. It means a lot to me. But don't think you have to keep it up. I mean, just when you want to. Just come when you want to. If something comes up, or if you don't feel like it— What I'm trying to say is, just the fact that you could come at all, that you even came once, that's a bonus for me. Do you get what I mean?"

She said yes, she thought so.

He said that he didn't want to interfere with her life.

"You're not," she said.

"Was that what you were going to say? I thought you were going to say something else."

In fact, she had almost said, What life?

No, she said, not really, nothing else.

"Good."

Three more weeks and she got a phone call. It was Mrs. Sands herself on the line, not one of the women in the office.

"Oh, Doree. I thought you might not be back yet. From your holiday. So you are back?"

"Yes," Doree said, trying to think where she could say she had been.

"But you hadn't got around to arranging another appointment?"

"No. Not yet."

"That's O.K. I was just checking. You are all right?"

"I'm all right."

"Fine. Fine. You know where I am if you ever need me. Ever just want to have a talk."

"Yes."

"So take care."

She hadn't mentioned Lloyd, hadn't asked if the visits had continued. Well, of course, Doree had said that they weren't going to. But Mrs. Sands was pretty good, usually, about sensing what was going on. Pretty good at holding off, too, when she understood that a question might not get her anywhere. Doree didn't know what she would have said, if asked—whether she would have backtracked and told a lie or come out with the truth. She had gone back, in fact, the very next Sunday after he more or less told her that it didn't matter whether she came or not.

He had a cold. He didn't know how he'd got it.

Maybe he had been coming down with it, he said, the last time he saw her, and that was why he'd been morose.

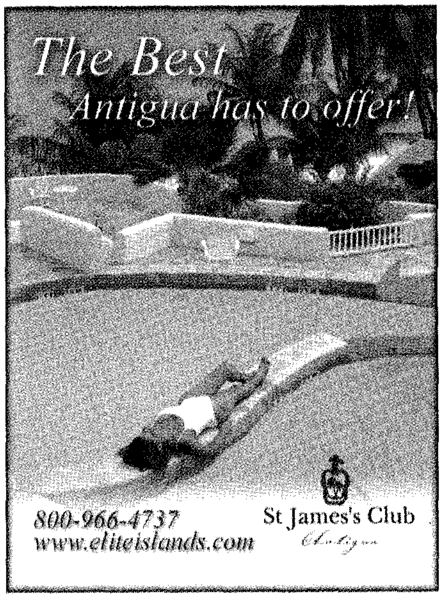
Morose. She seldom had anything to do, nowadays, with anyone who used a word like that, and it sounded strange to her. But he had always had a habit of using such words, and of course at one time they hadn't struck her as they did now.

"Do I seem like a different person to you?" he asked.

"Well, you look different," she said cautiously. "Don't I?"

"You look beautiful," he said sadly.

Something softened in her. But she fought against it.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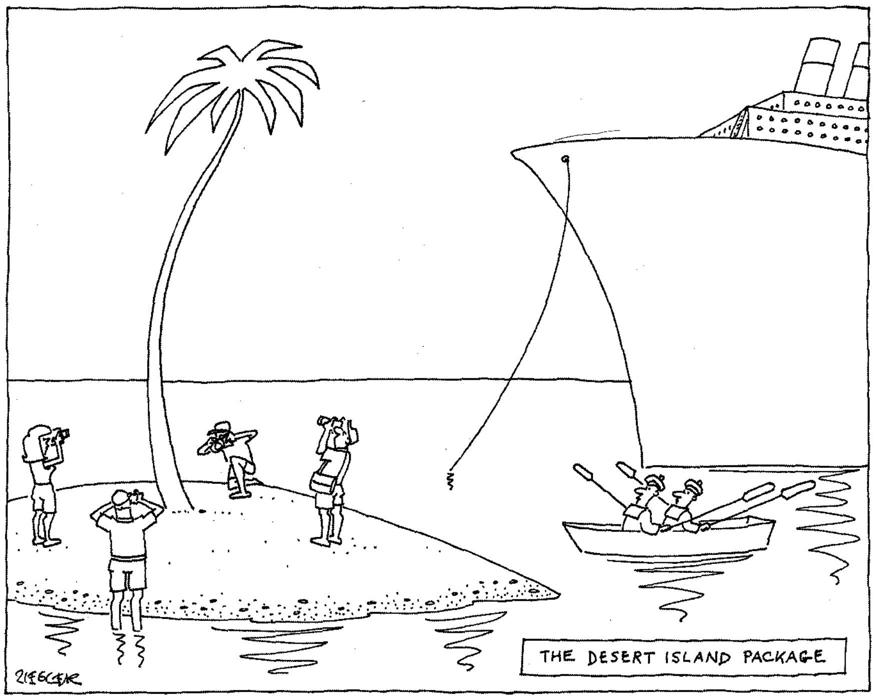

THE DESERT ISLAND PACKAGE

• •

"Do you feel different?" he asked. "Do you feel like a different person?"

She said she didn't know. "Do you?"

He said, "Altogether."

Later in the week a large envelope was given to her at work. It had been addressed to her care of the motel. It contained several sheets of paper, with writing on both sides. She didn't think at first of its being from him—she somehow had the idea that people in prison were not allowed to write letters. But, of course, he was a different sort of prisoner. He was not a criminal. He was only criminally insane.

There was no date on the document and not even a "Dear Doree." It just started talking to her in such a way that she thought it had to be some sort of religious invitation:

> People are looking all over for the solution. Their minds are sore (from looking). So many things jostling around and hurting them. You can see in their faces all their bruises and pains. They are troubled. They rush around. They have to shop and go to the laundromat and get their hair cut and earn a living or pick up their welfare checks. The poor ones have to do that and the rich ones have to look hard for the best ways to spend their money. That is work too. They have to build the best houses with gold faucets for their hot and cold water. And their Audis and magical toothbrushes and all possible contraptions and then burglar alarms to protect against slaughter and all ~~neigh~~ neither rich nor poor have any peace in their souls. I was going to write "neighbor" instead of "neither," why was that? I have not got any neighbor here. Where I am at least people have got beyond a lot of confusion. They know what their possessions are and always will be and they don't even have to buy or cook their own food. Or choose it. Choices are eliminated.
>
> All we that are here can get is what we can get out of our own minds.
>
> At the beginning all in my head was purturbation (Sp?). There was everlasting storm, and I would knock my head against cement in the hope of getting rid of it. Stopping my agony and my life. So punishments were meted. I got hosed down and tied up and drugs introduced in my bloodstream. I am not complaining either, because I had to learn there is no profit in that. Nor is it any different from the so-called real world, in which people drink and carry on and commit crimes to eliminate their thoughts which are painful. And often they get hauled off and incarcerated but it is not long enough for them to come out on the other side. And what is that? It is either total insanity or peace.
>
> Peace. I arrived at peace and am still sane. I imagine reading this now you are thinking I am going to say something about God Jesus or at any rate Buddha as if I had arrived at a religious conversion. No. I do not close my eyes and get lifted up by any specific Higher Power. I do not really know what is meant by any of that. What I do is Know Myself. Know Thyself is some kind of Commandment from somewhere, probably the Bible so at least in that I may have followed Christianity. Also, To Thy Own Self Be True—I have attempted that if it is in the Bible also. It does not say which parts—the bad or the good—to be true to so it is not intended as a guide to morality. Also Know Thyself does not relate either to morality as we know it in Behavior. But Behavior is not really my concern because I have been judged quite correctly as a person who cannot be trusted to judge how he should behave and that is the reason I am here.
>
> Back to the Know part in Know Thyself. I can say perfectly soberly that I know myself and I know the worst I am capable of and I know that I have done it. I am judged by the World as a Monster and I have no quarrel with that, even though I might say in passing that people who rain down bombs or burn cities or starve and murder hundreds of thousands of people are not generally considered Monsters but are showered with medals and honors, only acts against small numbers being considered shocking and evil. This being not meant as an excuse but just observation.
>
> What I Know in Myself is my own Evil. That is the secret of my comfort. I mean I know my Worst. It may be worse than other people's worst but in fact I do not have to think or worry about that. No excuses. I am at peace. Am I a Monster? The World says so and if it is said so then I agree. But then I say, the World does not have any real meaning for me. I am My Self and have no chance to be any other Self. I could say that I was crazy then but what does that mean? Crazy. Sane. I am I. I could not change my I then and I cannot change it now.
>
> Doree, if you have read this far, there is one special thing I want to tell you about but cannot write it down. If you ever think of coming back here then maybe I can tell you. Do not think I am heartless. It isn't that I wouldn't change things if I could but I can't.
>
> I am sending this to your place of work which I remember and the name of the town so my brain is working fine in some respects.

She thought that they would have to discuss this piece of writing at their next meeting and she read it over several times, but she could not think of anything to say. What she really wanted to talk about was whatever he had said was impossible to put in writing. But when she saw him again he behaved as if he had never written to her at all. She searched for a topic and told him about a once famous folksinger who had stayed at the motel that week. To her surprise he knew more than she did about the singer's career. It turned out that he had a television, or at least access to one, and watched some shows and, of course, the news, regularly. That gave them a bit more to talk about, until she could not help herself.

"What was the thing you couldn't tell me except in person?"

He said that he wished she hadn't

asked him. He didn't know if they were ready to discuss it.

Then she was afraid that it would be something she really could not handle, something unbearable, such as that he still loved her. "Love" was a word she could not stand to hear.

"O.K.," she said. "Maybe we're not."

Then she said, "Still, you better tell me. If I walked out of here and was struck down by a car then I would never know, and you would never have the chance to tell me again."

"True," he said.

"So what is it?"

"Next time. Next time. Sometimes I can't talk anymore. I want to but I just dry up, talking."

I have been thinking of you Doree ever since you left and regret I disappointed you. When you are sitting opposite me I tend to get more emotional than perhaps I show. It is not my right to go emotional in front of you, since you certainly have the right more than me and you are always very controlled. So I am going to reverse what I said before because I have come to the conclusion I can write to you after all better than I can talk.

Now where do I start?

Heaven exists.

That is one way but not right because I never believed in Heaven and Hell, etc. As far as I was concerned that was always a pile of crap. So it must sound pretty weird of me to bring up the subject now.

I will just say then: I have seen the children.

I have seen them and talked to them.

There. What are you thinking at the moment? You are thinking well, now he is really round the bend. Or, it's a dream and he can't distinguish a dream, he doesn't know the difference between a dream and awake. But I want to tell you I do know the difference and what I know is, they exist. I say they exist, not they are alive, because alive means in our particular Dimension, and I am not saying that is where they are. In fact I think they are not. But they do exist and it must be that there is another Dimension or maybe innumerable Dimensions, but what I know is that I have got access to whatever one they are in. Possibly I got hold of this from being so much on my own and having to think and think and with such as I have to think about. So after such suffering and solitude there is a Grace that has seen the way to giving me this reward. Me the very one that deserves it the least to the world's way of thinking.

Well if you have kept reading this far and not torn this to pieces you must want to know something. Such as how they are. They are fine. Really happy and smart. They don't seem to have any memory of anything bad. They are maybe a little older than they were but that is hard to say. They seem to understand at different levels. Yes. You can notice with Dimitri that he has learned to talk which he was not able to do. They are in a room I can partly recognize. It's like our house but more spacious and nicer. I asked them how they were being looked after and they just laughed at me and said something like they were able to look after themselves. I think Sasha was the one who said that. Sometimes they don't talk separately or at least I can't separate their voices but their identities are quite clear and I must say, joyful.

Please don't conclude that I am crazy. That is the fear that made me not want to tell you about this. I was crazy at one time but believe me I have shed all my old craziness like the bear sheds his coat. Or maybe I should say the snake sheds his skin. I know that if I had not done that I would never have been given this ability to reconnect with Sasha and Barbara Ann and Dimitri. Now I wish that you could be granted this chance as well because if it is a matter of deserving then you are way ahead of me. It may be harder for you to do because you live in the world so much more than I do but at least I can give you this information—the Truth—and in telling you I have seen them hope that it will make your heart lighter.

Doree wondered what Mrs. Sands would say or think, if she read this letter. Mrs. Sands would be careful, of course. She would be careful not to pass any outright verdict of craziness but she would carefully, kindly, steer Doree around in that direction. Or you might say she wouldn't steer—she would just pull the confusion away so that Doree would have to face what would then seem to have been her own conclusion all along. She would have to put the whole dangerous nonsense—this was Mrs. Sands speaking—out of her mind.

That was why Doree was not going anywhere near her.

Doree did think that he was crazy. And in what he had written there seemed to be some trace of the old bragging. She didn't write back. Days went by. Weeks. She didn't alter her opinion but she still held on to what he'd written, like a secret. And from time to time, when she was in the middle of spraying a bathroom mirror or tightening a sheet, a feeling came over her. For almost two years she had not taken any notice of the things that generally made people happy, such as nice weather or flowers in bloom or the smell of a bakery. She still did not have that spontaneous sense of happiness, exactly, but she had a reminder of what it was like. It had nothing to do with the weather or flowers. It was the idea of the children in what he had called their Dimension

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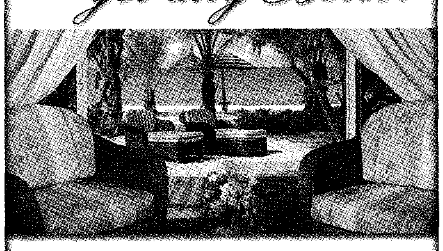

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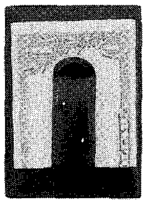

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that came sneaking up on her in this way, and for the first time brought a light feeling to her, not pain.

In all the time since what had happened had happened, any thought of the children had been something she had to get rid of, pull out immediately like a knife in her throat. She could not think their names, and if she heard a name that sounded like one of theirs she had to pull that out, too. Even children's voices, their shrieks and slapping feet as they ran to and from the motel swimming pool, had to be banished by a sort of gate that she could slam down behind her ears. What was different now was that she had a refuge she could go to as soon as such dangers rose anywhere around her.

And who had given it to her? Not Mrs. Sands—that was for sure. Not in all those hours sitting by the desk with the Kleenex discreetly handy.

Lloyd had given it to her. Lloyd, that terrible person, that isolated and insane person.

Insane if you wanted to call it that. But wasn't it possible that what he said was true—that he had come out on the other side? And who was to say that the visions of a person who had done such a thing and made such a journey might not mean something?

This notion wormed its way into her head and stayed there.

Along with the thought that Lloyd, of all people, might be the person she should be with now. What other use could she be in the world—she seemed to be saying this to somebody, probably to Mrs. Sands—what was she here for if not at least to listen to him?

I didn't say "forgive," she said to Mrs. Sands in her head. I would never say that. I would never do it.

But think. Aren't I just as cut off by what happened as he is? Nobody who knew about it would want me around. All I can do is remind people of what nobody can stand to be reminded of.

Disguise wasn't possible, not really. That crown of yellow spikes was pathetic.

So she found herself travelling on the bus again, heading down the highway. She remembered those nights right after her mother had died, when she would sneak out to meet Lloyd, lying to her mother's friend, the woman she was staying with, about where she was going. She remembered the friend's name, her mother's friend's name. Laurie.

Who but Lloyd would remember the children's names now, or the color of their eyes? Mrs. Sands, when she had to mention them, did not even call them children, but "your family," putting them in one clump together.

Going to meet Lloyd in those days, lying to Laurie, she had felt no guilt, only a sense of destiny, submission. She had felt that she was put on earth for no reason other than to be with him and try to understand him.

Well, it wasn't like that now. It was not the same.

She was sitting on the front seat across from the driver. She had a clear view through the windshield. And that was why she was the only passenger on the bus, the only person other than the driver, to see a pickup truck pull out from a side road without even slowing down, to see it rock across the empty Sunday-morning highway in front of them and plunge into the ditch. And to see something even stranger: the driver of the truck flying through the air in a manner that seemed both swift and slow, absurd and graceful. He landed in the gravel at the edge of the pavement, on the opposite side of the highway.

The other passengers didn't know why the driver had put on the brakes and brought them to a sudden uncomfortable stop. And at first all that Doree thought was, How did he get out? That young man or boy, who must have fallen asleep at the wheel. How did he fly out of the truck and launch himself so elegantly into the air?

"Fellow right in front of us," the driver said to his passengers. He was trying to speak loudly and calmly, but there was a tremor of amazement, something like awe, in his voice. "Just plowed across the road and into the ditch. We'll be on our way again as soon as we can and in the meantime please don't get out of the bus."

As if she had not heard that, or had some special right to be useful, Doree got out behind him. He did not reprimand her.

"Goddam asshole," he said as they crossed the road and there was nothing in his voice now but anger and exasperation. "Goddam asshole kid, can you believe it?"

The boy was lying on his back, arms and legs flung out, like somebody making an angel in the snow. Only there was gravel around him, not snow. His eyes were not quite closed. He was so young, a boy who had shot up tall before he even needed to shave. Possibly without a driver's license.

The driver was talking on his phone.

"Mile or so south of Bayfield, on 21, east side of the road."

A trickle of pink foam came out from under the boy's head, near the ear. It did not look like blood at all, but like the stuff you skim off the strawberries when you're making jam.

Doree crouched down beside him. She laid a hand on his chest. It was still. She bent her ear close. Somebody had ironed his shirt recently—it had that smell.

No breathing.

But her fingers on his smooth neck found a pulse.

She remembered something she'd been told. It was Lloyd who had told her, in case one of the children had an accident and he wasn't there. The tongue. The tongue can block the breathing, if it has fallen into the back of the throat. She laid the fingers of one hand on the boy's forehead and two fingers of the other hand under his chin. Press down on the forehead, press up on the chin, to clear the airway. A slight firm tilt.

If he still didn't breathe she would have to breathe into him.

She pinches the nostrils, takes a deep breath, seals his mouth with her lips, and breathes. Two breaths and check. Two breaths and check.

Another male voice, not the driver's. A motorist must have stopped. "You want this blanket under his head?" She shook her head tightly. She had remembered something else, about not moving the victim, so that you would not injure the spinal cord. She enveloped his mouth. She pressed his warm fresh skin. She breathed and waited. She breathed and waited again. And a faint moisture seemed to rise against her face.

The driver said something but she could not look up. Then she felt it for sure. A breath out of the boy's mouth. She spread her hand on the skin of his chest and at first she could not tell if it was rising and falling, because of her own trembling.

Yes. Yes.

It was a true breath. The airway was open. He was breathing on his own. He was breathing.

"Just lay it over him," she said to the man with the blanket. "To keep him warm."

"Is he alive?" the driver said, bending over her.

She nodded. Her fingers found the pulse again. The horrible pink stuff had not continued to flow. Maybe it was nothing important. Not from his brain.

"I can't hold the bus for you," the driver said. "We're behind schedule as it is."

The motorist said, "That's O.K. I can take over."

Be quiet, be quiet, she wanted to tell them. It seemed to her that silence was necessary, that everything in the world outside the boy's body had to concentrate, help it not to lose track of its duty to breathe.

Shy but steady whiffs now, a sweet obedience in the chest. Keep on, keep on.

"You hear that? This guy says he'll stay and watch out for him," the driver said. "Ambulance is coming as fast as they can."

"Go on," Doree said. "I'll hitch a ride to town with them and catch you on your way back tonight."

He had to bend to hear her. She spoke dismissively, without raising her head, as if she were the one whose breath was precious.

"You sure?" he said.

Sure.

"You don't have to get to London?"

No. ♦

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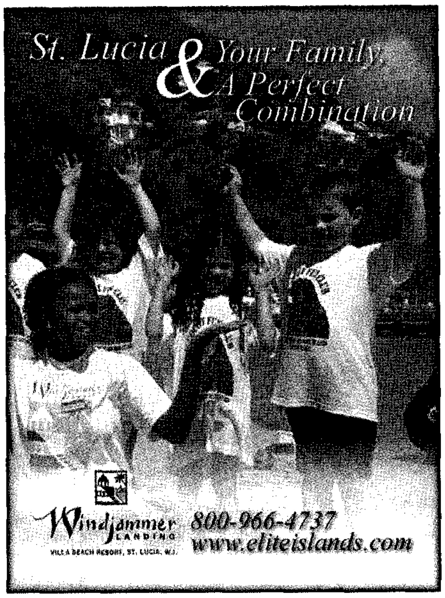
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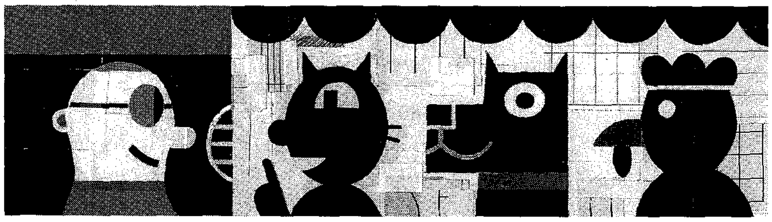
THE CRITICS



A CRITIC AT LARGE

HEADLESS HORSEMAN

The Reign of Terror revisited.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

Revisionism in history knows no boundaries. Just in the past few years, we have been told that that comet may have glanced right off the dinosaurs, prodding a few toward flight and feathers; that the German blitzkrieg barely meandered across Europe; and that Genghis Khan was actually a sharing and caring and ecumenical leader, Bill Moyers with a mustache and colorful folk costume. So it was inevitable that we would get a revisionist history of the French Reign of Terror—the period from September, 1793, to July, 1794, when the Committee of Public Safety, in Paris, invented the modern thought crime, cut off the heads of its enemies, and created the apparatus of the totalitarian state. Since the time of Burke, through Carlyle's history of the French Revolution and, above all, Dickens's "Tale of Two Cities," the imagery of the Terror—of the sansculottes knitting as tumbrels rolled—has been lodged deep in our imagination. "All perished, all, Friends, enemies, of all parties, ages, ranks, Head after head, and never heads enough For those who bade them fall," Wordsworth wrote, in disillusioned horror, after it was over; and we see the heads falling still.

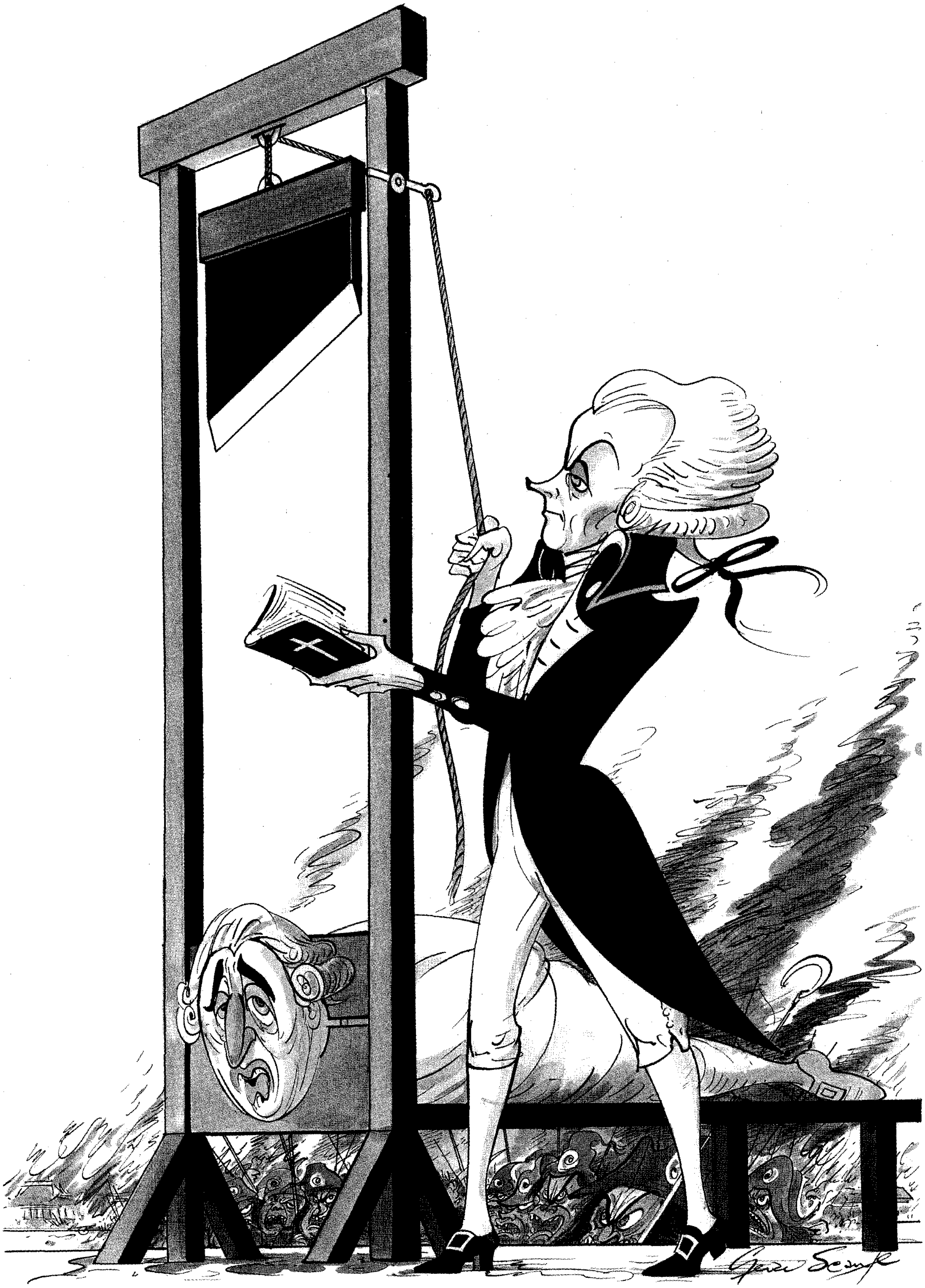
Yet our sense of such an iconic moment is bound to be partial—icons are flat. The real question about revisionist history is whether it turns something flat into something three-dimensional or just hangs it on the wall upside down. *This* revisionist history, now that it has crossed the Atlantic, turns out to be subtler and more interesting than some of the British reviews might have suggested. Written by the academic historian David Andress, the new book is called "The Terror: The Merciless War for Freedom in Revolutionary France" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $26), and the subtitle emphatically semaphores the new position. Andress is hardly an apologist for the Reign of Terror, and he is both too smart and too decent to scant its horrors. But he is in battle with the now standard view, which was entrenched by the French historian François Furet in the nineteen-seventies and eighties, and made most memorable and dramatic by Simon Schama in his 1990 book "Citizens." This is the view not that the Revolution mutated into the Terror by contingency and ill luck but that in some tragic sense the Revolution *was* the Terror: that the Terror was implicit in the entire rationalist program of starting over from Year One. The first necessity for a blank slate is an omnipotent eraser, and the guillotine was the one at hand.

Against this, Andress believes that the Terror was an episode in a sporadic civil war that stretched from 1789 to 1871—a bloody and ugly episode, certainly, but no bloodier and not much uglier than others that we write about less often. (Far fewer people were killed by the guillotine than in the Napoleonic battles of Austerlitz and Borodino.) More important, Andress sets out to demonstrate, the Terror was also a consequence of the reactionary encirclement of France by the other powers of Europe. Those powers had learned nothing and forgotten nothing; they had it in for Republican France, and intended to restore a vengeful absolutism to the throne. What drove the Terror was not a crazed intellectual desire to extend the Revolution to every corner of existence but a desperate desire to maintain its achievements in the face of opposition. Robespierre and his group were revolutionary butchers, but they were butchers surrounded by vampires. "It is necessary to maintain a sense of proportion," Andress writes in his introduction.

Well, what *was* the Terror? What are we to be proportionate about? It was, in effect, the second, panicked stage of the French Revolution. Like the American one, the French Revolution proceeded in stages, from appeals to the King to the rejection of him. Despite its subsequent reputation as a killing spree, it actually advanced more cautiously than the English one, more than a century before, which had also—as the British sometimes forget—culminated in regicide and massacre. Andress writes as crisp and up-to-date an account of the Revolution's origins as I have read. He explains how the financial crisis of the French treasury precipitated a political crisis, and how the slow stirrings of constitutional reform blossomed into a demand for fundamental change—in particular, the demand for the Third Estate, the common people, to have a role in governance. Yet Andress also underlines the fact that, throughout these first stages, what was wanted by the great mass of statesmen and by the National Assembly—the makeshift but representative gathering of the people who had declared the Rights of Man—was a constitutional monarchy along British lines.

It was the secret flight of the King's family from their palace in Paris to Varennes on the night of June 22, 1791, that precipitated the Terror. The weak and well-meaning King Louis XVI (who had taken up locksmithing, out of a belief in the virtues of "useful" craft and trade) got talked into fleeing toward the border of the Austrian Netherlands, where loyalist troops waited. Andress places some of the blame for this folly on the queen, Marie-Antoinette, who, true to her popular reputation, could not accept that things had changed or see that a monarchy nonabsolute in power would be better off in the long run. The King's flight was a gal-

GERALD SCARFE



The Terror wasn't secular reason run amok. It was a faith-based initiative, and the guillotine was another kind of auto-da-fé.

"Your chances of hailing a cab are better if you go to the curb."

• •

vanizing event for the revolutionary radicals in Paris; it at once vindicated their fears and justified their excesses.

Again and again, though, Andress leaves Paris and the familiar characters to delve into regional politics and economics. He is a member of what might be called the prices-in-the-provinces school of academic history, a practice that emphasizes events outside the capital and makes much of weekly economic fluctuations; what was spent for bread in Lyons, not what was said over coffee in Paris, shaped the course of events. Throughout the Terror, he points out, far more revolutionary bureaucrats were engaged in intricate and doomed bakery price-control schemes than were working the guillotine. He gives names and jobs to all the players in the tragedy, not in order to make heroes of individual agents but to replace the blood-maddened mobs of the Burkean imagination with actual groups and guilds and clan gatherings. Andress is at pains to demythologize the horrors these revolutionaries committed, which he does, sort of, making it plain that they were not mindlessly bloodthirsty but selective and, in their way, sane. One of the early rumblings of the Terror—the massacre of aristocrats and clerics in Paris in September, 1792—was in fact quite well regulated. The killings were semi-legal, with kangaroo courts quickly convened and a majority of the harmless prisoners released. And some of the worst horrors have been made worse still by time and legend. It turns out that Marie-Antoinette's friend the Princesse de Lamballe, who, according to long-established history, was murdered by the September mob, her naked body pierced and mutilated, was merely decapitated, and her fully clothed body brought directly to the police station, where—a very French touch, this—"within hours, corpse and head were reunited." This is some comfort, but perhaps not quite as much comfort as Andress thinks, either to the Princesse or to us.

The Committee of Public Safety—one of the first great Orwellian euphemisms—was formed to bring the massacres under control, or, as it turned out, to centralize, rationalize, and mechanize them. By then, the Convention (the successor of the National Assembly) had turned from its more or less orderly and bourgeois phase into a gathering of radical clans, who met every day in a former church to argue, drink, speechify, and accuse. It was as if S.D.S. had seized power in Washington in 1968 and Mark Rudd, Abbie Hoffman, Jane Fonda, and two or three ambitious renegade generals were all suddenly trying to run the country, while their followers smoked pot and played Jefferson Airplane records, oscillating between a vague, messianic utopianism and a baleful, apocalyptic vengefulness.

The drift toward absolute radicalism was dictated by the circumstances. In an ordinary political meeting, the action is bowl-shaped: everything flows toward the center. In a revolutionary meeting, the terrain is cambered, and everything flows toward the extreme right or the extreme left. Either a general or a fanatic was almost certain to prevail in those circumstances—a man with guns or a man who could hypnotize the men with guns.

The man to emerge was Maximilien Robespierre, who led the drive to decapitate the King, and became the chief magistrate of the Terror. Robespierre's life is the subject of "Fatal Purity: Robespierre and the French Revolution" (Metropolitan; $30), by Ruth Scurr, a youngish scholar who teaches at Cambridge. A more conventional account of the intersection of a single life and time than Andress's book, "Fatal Purity" is in its way just as rewarding, because of what Robespierre represents: the ascent of the mass-murdering nerd—a man who, having read a book, resolves to kill all the people who don't like it as much as he does. There is a case to be made that the real singularity of the Terror was the first appearance on the stage of history of this particular psychological type: not the tight-lipped inquisitor, alight with religious rage, but the small, fastidious intellectual, the man with an idea, the prototype of Lenin listening to his Beethoven as the Cheka begins its purges. In normal times, such men become college professors, or book reviewers or bloggers. It takes special historical circumstances for them to become killers: the removal of a ruling class without its replacement by a credible new one. In the confusion, their ethereal certainties look like the only solid thing to build on.

Robespierre, Scurr explains, was a provincial lawyer, well-educated and prim—he had been a scholarship boy at the excellent Collège Louis-le-Grand. After virtuous years in the provinces as a lawyer, often pleading against unjust convictions of the old regime, he arrived in Paris as the Revolution was beginning. He became a leader among the Jacobins, the radical group who met in a Dominican monastery associated with the Rue Saint-Jacques, which gave them their name, and who were in conflict with the Girondins, the Menshevik-like moderates, many of whom came from the area of the Gironde, around Bordeaux.

Bourgeois in manners and personal morals, Robespierre soon became the leader of the Montagnards—the Mountaineers, so-called because they took seats high up in the Convention assembly. He became a leader through negative force, and through the ascetic reputation that gave him the nickname "the Incorruptible." At the height of the Terror, he still lodged with a respectable working-class family, the Duplays, who made sure that there was white bread and jam for their beloved boarder, and oranges to aid his digestion. He flirted, but only flirted, with the Duplay daughters. He chose a life of unspectacular rectitude. He loved to read, and it was said that he slept with a copy of Rousseau's "Social Contract" under his pillow. Unlike his great, loose-living and loud-talking rival Danton, he was too unimaginative to be personally ambitious in an obvious way. Instead, he was a devotee of the idea of *vertu*—virtue, though the French word conveys the kind of encompassing gravity of purpose that used to be suggested by the phrase "moral seriousness." He never forgave Danton for joking that *vertu* was what Danton showed his wife every night.

The fact that no one was naturally inclined to follow him made him the man left standing after all the obvious leaders had worn themselves out shouting. Jean Anouilh, in "Poor Bitos," a now forgotten play from the nineteen-fifties, tried to draw the character: grave, charmless, touchy, proud, easily mocked, and just as easily, and murderously, offended. It is a type who could almost be mistaken for a secularized version of the religious inquisitor, burning heretics not out of hatred but out of love for the higher cause. But Torquemada and the other inquisitors were full-time fanatics who would modestly admit to the description. Robespierre and his closest collaborators were, in their own view, not fanatics but men of feeling and mind; they just happened to be right, that's all, and what was one to do with the people who insisted that they weren't?

Robespierre and his chief aide, the eloquent Saint-Just, made regicide seem not just necessary but noble. As Scurr sees it, their joint obsession with *vertu* set them apart from their more pragmatic contemporaries. By being the keenest voice for the execution of the King, and by pitching that plea in a tone not of personal vengeance but of the necessary work of the Revolution, Robespierre came to dominate. His tone was reflective and ideological rather than vicious or overwrought. The King, sadly, had to die for the sake of the Revolution—the true Revolution, which must be built on terror because it could not be compromised. In a speech, he later explained:

> If the spring of popular government in time of peace is virtue, the springs of popular government in revolution are at once *virtue and terror:* virtue, without which terror is fatal; terror, without which virtue is powerless. Terror is nothing other than justice, prompt, severe, inflexible; it is therefore an emanation of virtue; it is not so much a special principle as it is a consequence of the general principle of democracy applied to our country's most urgent needs. . . . Indulgence for the royalists, cry certain men, mercy for the villains! No! Mercy for the innocent, mercy for the weak, mercy for the unfortunate, mercy for humanity.

The tones of a new kind of abstract absolutism echo. Even the Inquisitor, on the whole, assumed that the majority of his subjects were true believers; heretics were always a minority—a diabolical minority, but a minority still. For Robespierre, the Revolution exists outside the virtuous revolutionaries, outside history, as a transcendent shimmering ideal to be served; anyone can be an enemy of the revolution, and it is possible for the enemies to outnumber the revolutionaries.

This note of mad spiritual striving rings out in all his words, and both Scurr and Andress make it plain that, whatever else he may have been, Robespierre was never a rationalist. He was a Romantic, and, specifically, a religious Romantic. It was Rousseau's vision of the workings of a mystical general will, not Voltaire's vision of toleration achieved through popular education, that moved him. "Robespierre in particular believed fervently that outright atheism was a trait spawned in the decadence of the aristocratic salons of the Old Regime," Andress writes. He opposed "dechristianization" and the persecution of priests. The national crisis could be solved not by reason but only by faith and tradition. At the height of his power, he organized, with pride, a vast Festival of the Supreme Being, where an effigy of atheism was set alight and burned to the ground as the crowd and choirs sang. He had spoken before of his belief in an "Eternal Being who intimately affects the destinies of nations and who seems to me personally to watch over the French Revolution in a very special way." Far from marking the extreme limits of secular reason, the Terror was a faith-based initiative, the guillotine the instrument of another kind of auto-da-fé. The Terror wasn't mad science; it was new faith.

Both Scurr and Andress grimly track the course of the next eighteen months, as Robespierre, holding various posts, oversaw the execution of almost two thousand men and women in the Place de la Révolution. Trials were held in which no defense witnesses were called and the jury had only to be persuaded that there was "moral proof" of the accused's opposition to the Revolution. After Marie-Antoinette, her hair gone white with worry, was sentenced to death, the radical Hébert, whose "Père Duchesne" letters had set a new high for obscenity in a revolutionary cause, exulted at "having with his own eyes seen the head of the female veto separated from her fucking tart's neck."

But soon enough it was Hébert's turn, and he was guillotined for being an ultra, a "false revolutionary," in Robespierre's words, "who would prefer to wear out one hundred red caps"—once a symbol of radicalism—"than do one good deed." (Andress tells us that the executioner waved a red cap "under his nose as he lay helplessly screaming beneath the waiting blade.") Then the moderates went, led by Danton, whose coarse joke to Robespierre became part of his indictment. Andress recounts, succinctly, the feuds and rivalries among the bewildering sects and sub-sects of the revolutionaries, and does a good job of dealing with the Terror outside Paris. (Some of the worst atrocities happened in the provinces, where counter-revolutionaries were lined up and executed by having grapeshot fired at them en masse, with hideous inefficiency.) He also points out that the fear of counter-revolution that was always the Jacobin rhetorical trump card wasn't without warrant; revolutionary France was a fear state but not yet a true police state, and spies and agents did come in and out of Paris with paranoia-inducing regularity.

This sense of beleaguerment helps explain a central mystery of the Terror regime: not how the ideologues kept their hold on the other ideologues but how, despite obvious signs of looniness, they kept their hold on the apparatus of power, on the army and the police. The modern method has usually been for the party or the dictator to have a private source of organized violence, Cheka or S.S., more ruthless than the normal ones. But the Jacobins had no militia or secret police. Andress suggests that, heartbreakingly, an idea of legitimacy, however warped, still seemed to move the French people. The Convention was the accepted source of authority, and soldiers and executioners alike followed its orders to a remarkable degree and accepted its rules and decisions, even as the Revolution turned on the revolutionaries.

The Terror was sadistic and it was cruel. The guillotine may have been a more "humane" form of death than the drawing and quartering of the ancien régime, but its rituals were not. Its victims, robbed even of minimal dignity, were forced to travel to their deaths in open carts, and then laid on planks and decapitated, as the crowd cheered and the blood sprayed and the heads, capable of expression only seconds before, were held up, usually frozen in a grimace. Whole families were killed, one by one, and forced to watch as each went to the scaffold; the aged Malesherbes, who had bravely campaigned for civil liberties under the old regime, had to witness his daughter and granddaughter and their husbands die before it was his turn.

It is often said that terror of this kind is possible only when one has first "dehumanized" some group of people—aristocrats, Jews, the bourgeoisie. In fact, what motivated the spectacle was exactly the knowledge that the victims were people, and capable of feeling pain and fear as people do. We don't humiliate vermin, or put them through show trials, or make them watch their fellow-vermin die first. The myth of mechanical murder is almost always only that. (If one good thing emerged from Daniel Goldhagen's "Hitler's Willing Executioners," it was the demonstration that, contra Hannah Arendt, the actions of the Nazi murderers were not detached and bureaucratic but actively sadistic and cruel.) The night before their execution, the victims, understanding that the purpose of the spectacle was to degrade them by an elaborate theatre of power and powerlessness, rehearsed the routine of their death in order not to break down on the scaffold.

By the summer of 1793, the madness was so evident that even a member of the Convention had to wonder whether he would be next. Andress makes the good point that the Jacobin *terroristes* remained idealistic and argumentative even to the end. Robespierre and Saint-Just, instead of arming their own militia, as they might well have done—they started a military academy—went on perorating, until, on July 27, 1794, the members of the Convention turned on them, out of fear for their own necks. Enough of the soldiers, surprisingly, turned with them, and Robespierre, his brother, and Saint-Just all went to the guillotine the next day. The crowd cheered their deaths, too. Soon a new terror of reprisals was launched, by the Gilded Youth, a band of royalist thugs.

Scurr ends her book with a hard-edged survey of Robespierre's stoical last hours. Andress ends his with a comparison between the Reign of Terror and our own "war on terror," even though our use of state violence to stop terror is more like one of the overreactions of the ancien régime than like anything that he has described. The terror of the state and the panic that terrorism of the late-nineteenth-century anarchist kind puts *into* the state are simply different things, allied only by a word. More persuasive is Andress's attempt to release the Revolution, and the Terror, from the hold of the Burkean critique of rationalism. It was not an excess of encyclopedias that moved the murderers.

Even if we accept that the revolutionaries were not the only bloody-minded madmen in Europe, do we end our reading with a new sense of proportion? Whatever academic scholarship may insist, surely a sense of proportion is the last thing we want from history—perspective, certainly, but not proportion. Anything, after all, can be seen in proportion, shown to be no worse a crime than some other thing. Time and distance can't help but give us a sense of proportion: it was long ago and far away and so what? What the great historians give us, instead, is a renewed sense of sorrow and anger and pity for history's victims—for some luckless middle-aged Frenchman standing in the cold gray, shivering as he watches the members of his family being tied up and having their heads cut off. Read Gibbon on the destruction of the Alexandria library by the Christians, or E. P. Thompson on the Luddites—not to mention Robert Conquest on the Gulag—and suddenly old murders matter again; the glory of the work of these historians is that the right of the dead to have their pain and suffering taken seriously is being honored. It is not for history to supply us with a sense of history. Life always supplies us with a sense of history. It is for history to supply us with a sense of life.

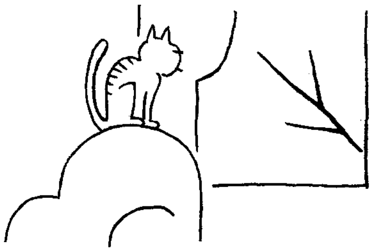
Or death. For there is something new in the Reign of Terror, and that is its absolutism. You couldn't escape it. In the old regime, if you were determined to stay out of politics, politics could stay out of you. In revolutionary France, the modern development was that you could not withdraw, or go into self-exile—you could not even repent or adopt the other religion. You could only wait and hope not to die. When the Abbé Sieyès, asked what he had done during the Terror, answered, "I lived," he was making more than a mordant joke; he was identifying the new thing that had come into the world, which was a will to killing that made merely living achievement enough.

The bloodlust of the time makes the attempt to trace the Terror to any single intellectual source, or peculiar circumstance—to Enlightenment rationalism gone mad, or to the paranoia of the encircled Republicans—feel inadequate to the Terror's essential nature, which was that it didn't matter what the ideology was. The argument that a taste for the ideal and the tabula rasa leads to terror, after all, would be more convincing if its opposite—a desire for an organic, authentic, traditional society—didn't lead to terror, too. The Red Terror led to a White Terror; Robespierre's head had hardly fallen before the Gilded Youth were attacking the now helpless Jacobins. It sometimes seems as if history had deliberately placed Hitler and Stalin side by side at the climax of the horror of modern history simply to demonstrate that the road to Hell is paved with any intention you like; a planned, pseudo-rationalist utopianism and an organic, racial, backward-looking Romanticism ended up with the same camps and the same carnage. The historical lesson of the first Terror is not that reason devours its own but that reason cannot stop us from devouring each other. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

The Man of My Dreams, *by Curtis Sittenfeld (Random House; $22.95).* Sittenfeld's second novel features a heroine, Hannah, much like the one in her widely praised début, "Prep": an outsider who casts a critical eye on her peers. Here, though, the class cues that pervaded the boarding-school milieu of "Prep" are largely absent, as Hannah's turbulent relationships with men mark her navigation into adult life and she wittily dissects the ways in which those around her entice and discourage the opposite sex. Sittenfeld has a brisk narrative style and a rare ability to turn nearly alienating flaws into vulnerability, but her central characters, despite their acute observations of others, have no introspective faculty at all. The final chapter, written as a letter from Hannah to her former psychiatrist—and perhaps intended to temper the conventional happy ending that would place this novel squarely in the "chick lit" category—is disastrously clunky.

Digging to America, *by Anne Tyler (Knopf; $24.95).* Tyler is our consummate chronicler of the bewilderments of family life. In her seventeenth novel, an improbable friendship develops between two couples who meet by chance at an airport where they are picking up babies they have adopted from Korea. The Yazdans, an almost entirely assimilated Iranian-American couple, immediately change their daughter's name to Susan; the politically correct Donaldsons insist on calling their baby Jin-Ho and dressing her in Korean clothes. There are many opportunities for the sort of rueful comedy at which Tyler excels, but she also explores the permutations of estrangement available to those whose identity depends on calling elsewhere home, and delineates, with offhand grace, how subtly our own set of family customs defines us. Tyler herself married into an Iranian family, and her depictions of humid afternoons of loquacious relatives and endless food are wryly affectionate.



Betrayed, *by Linda Diebel (Carroll & Graf; $27).* In October, 2001, Digna Ochoa, a world-renowned Mexican human-rights lawyer, was found dead in her Mexico City office. Although she often received death threats and had been previously kidnapped, raped, and tortured, Mexican government officials, the press, and jealous former colleagues tried to spin her death as a suicide, bolstering this far-fetched interpretation by attacks on her character. Arguing that Ochoa was assassinated, Diebel persuasively dismantles the suicide theory, and tenaciously traces the disturbing collusion and cover-up that followed Ochoa's death. She also vividly describes how in her work Ochoa confronted the Mexican military and the *narcotraficantes* (the most likely culprits) on behalf of indigenous subsistence farmers.

Stuart, *by Alexander Masters (Delacorte; $20).* Masters's tragicomic portrait of Stuart Shorter, an "ex-homeless, ex-junkie psychopath" whom he befriended while studying at Cambridge University, starts in the present and moves backward. Through the particulars of a fractured life, including stays in seventeen prisons and a parking garage, Masters hopes to answer Stuart's question "What murdered the boy I was?" Masters is candid about his exasperation with Stuart—he confesses at one point to feeling "sated" with his subject's troubles—and achieves a perfect balance of empathy and comedy. The real attraction, however, is Stuart's own voice, as when he recalls "getting rageous" or offers recipes for "prison hooch" and "convict curry." His life resists easy explanation, which makes Masters's patient attention to its concrete details all the more affecting.

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POP MUSIC

BLIGHTED

Americans' fitful appetite for British pop.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

If you have a song in your heart and can't get onto "American Idol," think about buying a plane ticket. In the nineteen-fifties, American blues records found their way to England and caused young Britons like John Lennon and Keith Richards to start their own bands and record cover versions of songs by Muddy Waters and the Isley Brothers. (Lennon and Richards reportedly went on to write their own material.) Soon, England became a destination for American pop musicians looking to establish themselves. The U.K. has a state-sponsored radio conglomerate, the BBC, which almost everyone listens to, and a long tradition of music weeklies competing to herald the arrival of the hottest new pop act. In September of 1966, Jimi Hendrix went to London and hired an English rhythm section. When he returned home, nine months later, he had scored three top-ten singles in the U.K. and had landed an American record contract. In 2001, the British weekly *New Musical Express*, known as *NME*, anointed a little-known New York band called the Strokes as the Next Big Thing, convincingly enough to make it true, at least for a year.

The musical traffic flows in both directions, and English pop acts are currently faring as well in the States as they have at any time since the early eighties, when Duran Duran, Culture Club, and Wham! dominated MTV with their cheery, decadent songs and ruffled outfits. The anthemic yet cuddly rock band Coldplay, which sounds like a less belligerent version of U2, has sold three million copies of its recent album "X&Y." James Blunt, a hunky former British Army officer, has achieved omnipresence with his daft ballad "You're Beautiful," a pledge to a woman whom the singer glimpsed once. ("I've got a plan," Blunt announces, suggesting that he may intend to stalk his dream girl, but he opts instead for the historically proven approach of braying "You're beautiful" nine times.) Finally, "Unwritten," an agile pop album by Natasha Bedingfield, has sold half a million copies on the strength of the title track, a perky compendium of self-help mottoes.

These musicians don't sound all that similar. Coldplay's better songs are miniature epics that suggest vast stores of emotion; Bedingfield is a clean-cut pop singer with a knack for R. & B.; and Blunt satisfies an enduring if baffling need for men who mewl without their shirts on. Nevertheless, they have several crucial things in common: their lyrics tend to be uplifting; they lack identifiably English accents, and they avoid British slang unfamiliar to Americans. These attributes are what distinguish their music from another strain of mainstream English pop, which rarely makes it big in the States, even when it should.

An implicit embargo began in the fifties, with Cliff Richard, England's answer to Elvis Presley, who had to wait almost twenty years for his first American hit, and reached its height with Robbie Williams, a former boy-band singer who is a superstar everywhere but here. The Arctic Monkeys, one of *NME's* recent picks, are the latest British pop sensation to have got stuck at customs. Logistical factors—the comparative ability of independents and majors to promote acts, the tight strictures of radio—are partly to blame, but the bigger problem is one of accents and attitude. If your songs are cynical, ironic, or misanthropic, and loaded with references to Tesco or "tracky bottoms tucked in socks," Americans may simply turn the dial.

Robbie Williams, originally a member of the band Take That, struck out on his own in the mid-nineties and became a favorite of the British tabloids. He looks like a young Sean Connery gone to seed, and delights in bragging about his dissolute behavior. A duet called "Kids," which Williams recorded in 2000 with Kylie Minogue—an Australian singer who has also had trouble gaining traction in America—sums up the dark British sophistication that amounts to self-imposed quarantine. The verses unfold over an irresistible, shifting dance beat and segue into a titanic rock chorus that suggests ABBA singing over an AC/DC track. The lyrics, though, don't encourage the kind of identification that kids like to have with pop stars. Williams and Minogue dismantle the fourth wall in the very first verse—"We'll paint by numbers till something sticks. We don't mind doing it for the kids"—and Williams, after trading suggestive lines with Minogue, ends the song with this rap: "Single-handedly raising the economy, ain't no chance of the record company dropping me. Press be asking 'Do I care for sodomy?' I don't know—yeah, probably."

The Arctic Monkeys are an independent rock band, a genre in which sunny dispositions are hardly the norm. Even so, Alex Turner, the twenty-year-old lead singer and songwriter, manages to summon the intractable bleakness of someone three times his age and much less successful. The band built its audience by playing live shows—constantly, all over England—and by giving away its songs as MP3s on Myspace.com. When its remarkable album, "Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not," was released, in January, it sold more than three hundred and fifty thousand copies in the first week, making it the fastest-selling début in British history. (So much for the idea that giving away your music hurts sales.)

Turner is a prodigy at both character sketches and song form, able to describe the marginal life of a streetwalker ("She don't do major credit cards, I doubt she does receipts, it's all not quite legitimate") and fickle fans ("'Cause all you people are vampires, and all your stories are stale, and though you pretend to stand by us, I know you're certain we'll fail") in deceptively casual lyrics, which he delivers in a thick Yorkshire accent. "Whatever People Say" has sold a hundred and seventy-eight thousand copies in America, a respectable number for an independent release, but it has fallen from a high of No. 24 on the *Billboard* charts, in March, to No. 139. The Monkeys' live performances make it clear that, though they play furiously, they aren't willing to smile or dance in order to sell their songs. At Webster Hall in March, Turner and his three bandmates wore tennis shirts and corduroys, and much of the time they stood stock still, seemingly uninterested in production values like jumping up and down. Turner's words can't be twisted into feel-good phrases; he expresses himself with a lapidary precision that shuns poetic cover. When he finishes the long, solo introduction to "When the Sun Goes Down," a song about a prostitute and her pimp, he spits, "I said he's a scumbag, don't you *know*."

"I Bet You Look Good on the Dancefloor," which was a single in the U.K., is another combination of robust dance rock and deep disdain. When Turner sings the title phrase, and follows with "I don't know if you're looking for romance or, I don't know what you're looking for," it doesn't sound like he's musing over the magical possibilities of a night out. In fact, if you've heard enough Arctic Monkeys songs, you know that nights routinely end with somebody going home with the wrong person, a fight breaking out, and everyone—except the guy who's singing—regretting it all in the morning.

Americans are comfortable with certain kinds of moral ambiguity—hard rock and hip-hop are full of harsh conclusions and unpleasant world views—but we prefer our British bands to be picker-uppers. Somewhere, an American record label is trying to figure out whether Lily Allen is our kind of British. Allen, a twenty-one-year-old singer, is earning deserved raves in the London press and on music blogs. The daughter of the British comedian Keith Allen, she was signed in December by Parlophone on the basis of her delightful, ska-inflected songs, which are now available for download on her Myspace page. (She has given just four live performances, all within the past month and at the same London club.)

"LDN," a lighthearted rap about her home town, has been released as a single, along with a low-budget digital video of Allen bicycling innocently around London. The track is built on a calypso loop, and Allen's voice tends to lilt and skip, as if she were singing along to some of her favorite songs while walking down the street. In an accent dismissed in one British paper as "mockney" (a middle-class imitation of Cockney), she celebrates London on a sunny day, airily wondering, "Why, oh why, would I want to be anywhere else?" But she cannot avoid her countrymen's realist tendencies, and, as the first verse closes, you can hear the soft thump of record executives dropping their heads to the table: "Everything seems to look as it should, but I wonder what goes on behind doors. A fella looking dapper, and he's sitting with a slapper, then I see it's a pimp and his crack whore." ♦

Lily Allen's ska-inflected songs are a hit in London but may not be uplifting enough for Americans. Photograph by Chris Floyd.

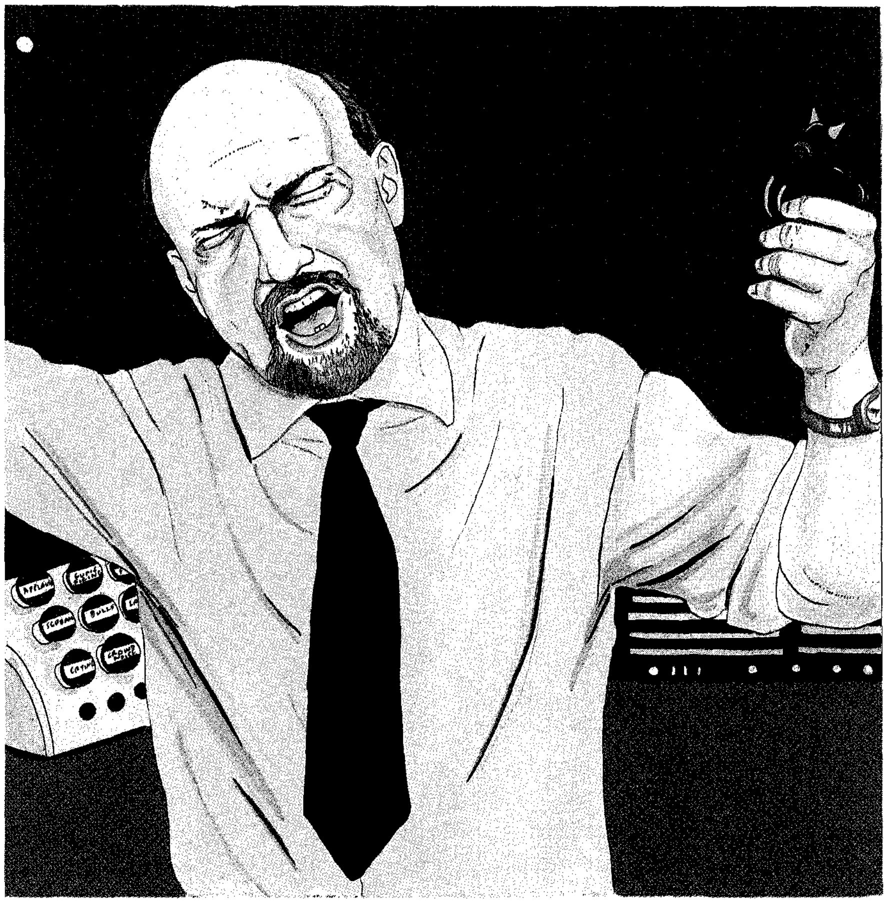
ON TELEVISION

ALL IN THE GAME

Making money the Jim Cramer way.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

People have very definite opinions of Jim Cramer's bonkers CNBC show "Mad Money," just as they do of professional wrestling, which Cramer's show resembles, though he's the only contestant on the screen, shouting, gesticulating, pacing, sweating, and preaching the virtues of the stock market to the point where he's on the verge of falling on the floor and speaking in tongues. It's entirely possible that he has actually done that; I haven't seen every show. He did drop down and do seven pushups out of the blue, a couple of weeks ago, and then, a few days later, when a caller from Pennsylvania went on too long about something that Cramer felt was obvious, he lay down on the floor, put his head on a pillow, and closed his eyes. Dan Rather, who interviewed Cramer on "60 Minutes" last fall, called him "the Jerry Lewis of business-show hosts." He's also the Jerry *Lee* Lewis of business-show hosts, but instead of a piano he has a battery of props and a cacophonous symphony of sound effects: when he bangs on the buttons of a console during the show, we hear, among other evocative noises, barking dogs, a gong, a truck backing up, a few bars of "The Stars and Stripes Forever," a baby crying, a heart monitor beeping to indicate a flatlining patient, and machine-gun fire. Cramer is exhausting to watch—you say exhilarating, I say exhausting, but then I am not one to get energized by the repeated sound effect of a person yelling in terror and then crashing through a window and falling—and a normal person isn't fit for any other activity afterward, except perhaps a cleansing walk across Antarctica, or the Gobi Desert, or any other remote expanse where he is unlikely to be assaulted by the sound of another person's voice for at least a week.



"Mad Money" on CNBC: Ka-ching! go the strings of Cramer's heart.

LARA TOMLIN

There are people who can't watch Cramer for five minutes—his show is on every weeknight at six, and is rebroadcast at nine and twelve (in case you're in need of a midnight smack)—and there are those who can't watch him for five seconds. And then there are his devotees, who call in and say "*Boo*-yah!" or "Boo-*yah!*" or "A Hoosier boo-yah to ya!" and who have made "Mad Money," which débuted in March of last year, one of the most popular shows on CNBC. The number of nightly viewers is under half a million, but all those viewers are drooling with desire to learn the Cramer way to pick stocks. And networks and advertisers like drooling viewers very much. Cramer—whose fans like to call him Jimmy and Jimbo and, for some reason, Skeedaddy—is fifty-one, and he is a boomer in more ways than one. Some years ago, he blew out an eardrum; perhaps, in addition to wanting to make his followers as rich as he is, Cramer wants to make them half deaf, too.

Making the viewers rich—that's Cramer's constant refrain on "Mad Money." (He also has a daily syndicated radio show, and a column in *New York.*) He is well qualified for the mission: he made a fortune managing a hedge fund in the nineties, and he co-founded the investment-news Web site TheStreet.com. "Let's try to make some money!" he screams in the opening title sequence of every show; it must *kill* this prophet of profit that he can't responsibly drop that wimpy, tempered "try" and shout out a more emphatic call to arms. Cramer isn't a halfway kind of guy; he wrote a book four years ago called "Confessions of a Street Addict." It's a pretty good yarn, too, full of outsized exploits and outsized self-justifying apologies for his behavior during those exploits. He has two other books, whose titles are similarly self-explanatory: "You Got Screwed! Why Wall Street Tanked and How You Can Prosper," a thin book meant to capitalize on investors' outrage at corporate scandals and the burst stock bubble, and "Jim Cramer's Real Money: Sane Investing in an Insane World," which came out when "Mad Money" started last year. (Cramer has now entered the pantheon of writers whose names are in the title of their books; the cover of the latest one actually names him twice, once as Jim Cramer and once as James J. Cramer. Callers still mention the book on the air, and whenever they do Cramer holds up a copy and shouts something like "The book! The book!," then tosses it off to the side in yet another signature gesture. A big bombastic branding-bonanza boo-yah to ya, Jimmy!)

Cramer understood stock tables by the time he was nine, and even someone who is not able to be truly discerning when it comes to TV money mavens can see that he has a gift. He has been called a genius, often by his critics; in fact, Cramer's critics seem to use the word more freely than his admirers, as if to prove that they are generous in spirit and not merely envious. (He is said to be worth between fifty and a hundred million dollars. His father gave him *Business Week* when he was nine, but I know that can't be why he is so rich today, because my father also gave me articles from *Business Week* when I was that age, and I am, like, so *not* worth between fifty and a hundred million dollars.) In most of his shows, there is what Cramer calls a "lightning round," when he gives rapid-fire buy-and-sell advice to callers who ask about particular stocks. It's a test of the depth and breadth of his knowledge, and he always puts on a topnotch performance.

A site called CramerWatch.org, which is healthily skeptical and funny about Cramer, pits a monkey called Leonard (really just a picture of a monkey that when you click on it says "Buy" half the time and "Sell" half the time) against Cramer; Leonard and Jimbo come out roughly equal when it comes to the subsequent thirty-day prices of the lightning-round picks. (Other sites have checked the performance of stocks that Cramer recommends during the less game-showy segments of "Mad Money," and he fares much better.) But if there are viewers who get burned by Cramer's fire, we don't hear from them on the air, and in any case the show is sprinkled throughout with disclaimers, including a long, scrolling document that is part of the opening credits. Cramer constantly urges people to do their homework—to research and track their investments, and to know why they are buying something in the first place. He says that he wants to educate as well as entertain, but it's hard to know how many people are being educated in the circus atmosphere that is "Mad Money." The cameras appear to be operated by Leonard the monkey: they zoom in and out and swoop down and around, and shots rarely last longer than a second. A stock ticker and a news zipper and a jagged orange banner with thumbnail versions of whatever Cramer is ranting about take up a third of the screen, and metal music plays during the lightning round. (At the beginning of the round, Cramer typically throws his desk chair across the room.) Maybe he makes some people feel as though they were really in the game, like the passionate bystanders who call sports-radio shows and talk about scores and prospects as if they themselves had a hand in the outcomes. The students who attend tapings on the college tours that Cramer has taken to doing are often made giddy by his presence, whooping and waving big foam fingers in the air, as if they were trying to get picked out of the crowd by Bob Barker on "The Price Is Right."

A month or so ago, Cramer devoted an entire show to "vice" stocks, to make a point: investing, he said, has to be unemotional, removed from considerations of ethics. ("I'm determined to rid you of that ethical inner voice," the orange banner said.) He talked about a tobacco company, a bullet manufacturer, and Smith & Wesson. Finally, about a half hour into the show, he said, "Yes, we are being a tad facetious . . . because I need you to be thinking that you can make the money and then free yourself, do whatever you want with the money. I have made a fortune in firearms stocks, and I've given a fortune to gun control." He added, of the profits to be made, "Somebody somewhere is going to take it. Why shouldn't it be you?" *Whaaa?* This wasn't facetious. He meant it. I find Cramer's egomania hugely entertaining, yet I feel flattened by the hurricane force of his monomania. In any case, if getting rich is your goal, you're not going to get there by watching Cramer's show. Remember, *he* didn't get rich by sitting around watching TV. ♦

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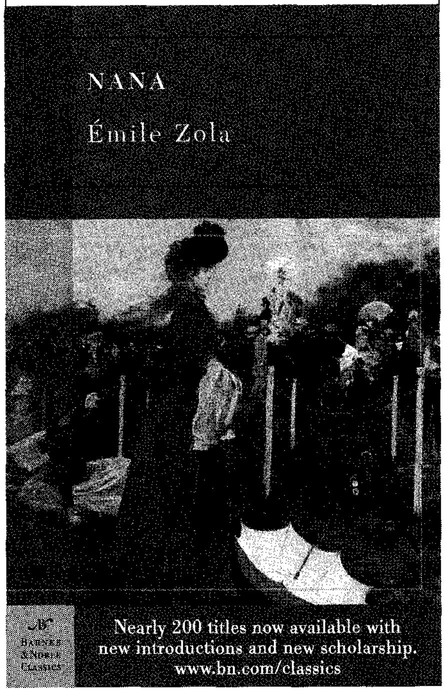

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

VIOLENT TIMES

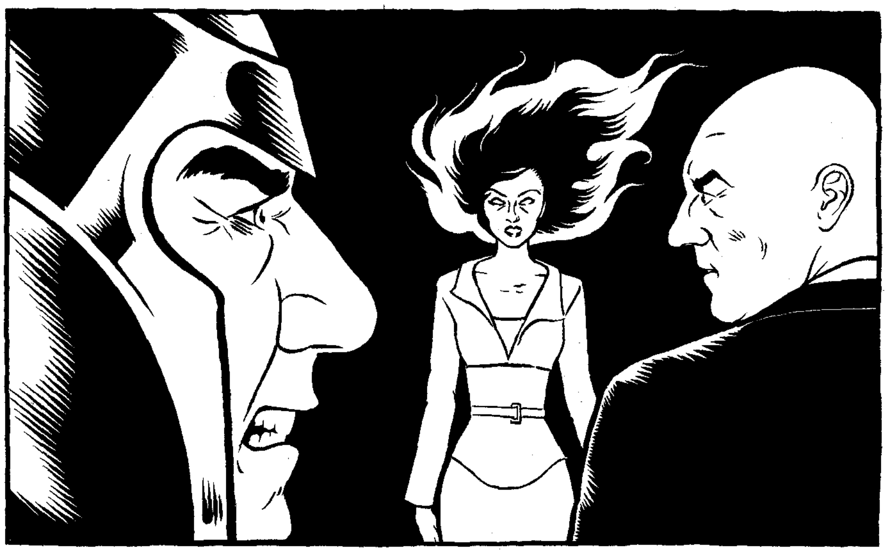
"X-Men: The Last Stand" and "The Cult of the Suicide Bomber."

BY DAVID DENBY

Once you've seen, in the third "X-Men" movie, Hugh Jackman hurling through the air and smashing into a tree, or Halle Berry spinning like a top as she ascends to nowhere, you don't need to see it again. But Brett Ratner, taking over as the director of the franchise from Bryan Singer, who directed the first two movies in the series, has no fear of repetition. Anything but. Ratner, the auteur of the frenzied "Rush Hour" movies, is a crude synthesizer of comedy and action tropes, and in "X-Men: The Last Stand" he disdains the liquid beauty and the poetic fantasy of Singer's work, and trashes his actors by repeatedly slamming them around or leaving them stranded. Famke Janssen, as Jean, the class-5 mutant who has unparalleled powers, receives an enormous buildup: the megalomaniacal Magneto (Sir Ian McKellen), who thinks that mutants should simply annihilate humans, releases Jean's strengths as a destroyer, and she has a few man-devouring scenes that suggest what a liberated mutant woman can do. At the climax of the movie, however, Ratner leaves Janssen standing stock still—her red hair backlit in a halo—and looking puzzled. I've never seen an actress so obviously lost—and just when she should be taking control. Anna Paquin also stands around looking blank, and the stunning Rebecca Romijn, as Mystique, in body-fitting blue scales—the most openly erotic image in recent mainstream cinema—is quickly killed off.

Ratner revels in Sir Ian's balcony-shaking theatrical voice (as was said of Orson Welles, McKellen seems to carry his own echo chamber around with him), but as a director he is no lover of women. He doesn't seem to love much of anything in this movie, except for spasmodic violence. In this installment, written by Simon Kinberg and Zak Penn, a chemical cure for mutancy has been found; the President of the United States (Josef Sommer) supports it, but almost none of the mutants want to be "cured." There's the usual earnest plea that ethnic minorities be left alone to cultivate their otherness rather than be forcibly merged into the bland mediocrity of humankind, but the liberal social argument, such as it is, is soon abandoned. A dispute breaks out (it's been simmering all through the series) between Magneto and the peaceable Professor Xavier (Patrick Stewart), and, in an execrably staged scene, the movie ends in a three-way war (humans and two kinds of mutants) on Alcatraz. People are blown away, cars are flung up in the air and set on fire, and so on. But you can't see much of it, because Ratner, covering a multitude of clumsy sins, stages it in semi-darkness.

What a comedown, after the weirdly beautiful things Singer and his technicians did in the first two movies. For Singer, the essence of digital magic was transformation: one person's flesh can turn into another's, or melt and pour into a flashing metal stream. Among other things, the first two movies were a celebration of the human body brought to perfection and then pushed by super-earthly flights of imagination into mythical achievement. But Ratner's movie is one thudding climax after another, and it left me exhausted, the way the second and third movies in the "Matrix" series did. Computer-generated imagery, an enormous breakthrough in film technology (analogous to the development of color cinematography), has existed in its mature form for little more than a decade, and already it's threatening to become a nuisance and a bore. Where is it written that C.G.I. has to be used to enhance violence in comic-book plots? Singer and Peter Jackson have used it as artists, but they are selling violence, too. Maybe it's time for the aesthetes—an American Cocteau or two—to create a whole new digital world.



Ian McKellen, Famke Janssen, and Patrick Stewart in the new mutant chronicle.

GRANT SHAFFER

Many of us, of course, have spent hours at the movies relishing violence and explosions as entertainment. In the documentary "The Cult of the Suicide Bomber," we see explosions in which real people die, and the sequence comes as a kick in the gut. In 2005, Robert Baer, the C.I.A. case officer whose adventures and misadventures served as the basis for George Clooney's role in "Syriana," went around the Middle East with a camera crew, interviewing Lebanese and Israeli intelligence officers and politicians, and the families of suicide bombers and their victims. In between the interviews, Baer and his collaborators, the producer-directors Kevin Toolis and David Batty, drawing on news-agency footage, lay out the historical development of suicide as a weapon—first as a weapon of war, then of terror. The movie is a pageant of fanaticism, sacrifice, and death, and the most striking passage comes near the end. Some of the Lebanese and West Bank bombers were trailed by cameramen, and the footage they recorded—say, of a car bomber taking out an Israeli military patrol—was later used by terrorist organizations as a recruiting and propaganda tool. Baer shows some of those films again and again, and by the end of the sequence I wasn't sure what enraged me more—the moviemaking terrorists, the blithe idiocy of routine commercial entertainment, or my own complacency in putting up with so much of it.

Baer, who narrates, begins by saying that he is obsessed with the terrorist bombing of the American Embassy in Beirut, in April, 1983, which killed sixty-three people and wiped out most of the C.I.A. station there. How did suicide become so potent a force? He goes through the stages: Ayatollah Khomeini, in the early nineteen-eighties, sanctified very young soldiers' dying in the defense of Iran, which encouraged a thirteen-year-old boy to strap explosives to his body and blow up an Iraqi tank; Hezbollah used terror against Israelis occupying southern Lebanon in the eighties and nineties; and so on. The filmmakers place each development in its political context, and they trace the increasingly sinister use of religion to justify self-slaughter and murder. Baer can't say who bombed the Embassy, but he strongly suggests that Iran was behind it, and that Iran has been waging a secret war against American interests for more than a quarter of a century.

That's the news that Baer threads through "The Cult of the Suicide Bomber." But the real center of interest, for me, at least, lies in the families of the young men who died. The act by which these kids have fulfilled themselves has ended any possibility that we might attain further knowledge of their temperaments or their souls. What of those who are left behind? An Iranian mother in a black head scarf, referring to her fifteen-year-old son—a photograph shows a slender boy with dark eyes and the faint beginnings of a mustache—who died in battle, says, simply, "He became a martyr for God." In a city near Tehran, a male relative of a bomber, pointing to a photograph, says, "There's the martyr Hossein." Both speak as if the boys had attained a purely official identity, as if they were not their own dead children. "It was a good path for him to take. So why would we stop him?" the mother asks Baer, and there are more remarks, from brothers, sisters, and friends, in praise of the suicide's duty and rectitude. Other families of young dead warriors may grieve, but these people do not. Did Baer choose them for their ideological purity, or were they the only ones who would talk to him?

The families must be under enormous pressure from Hezbollah, Hamas, and other such organizations to say only the approved things. Still, knowing this, one looks for a fuller response. Did at least one of the bombers' brothers or sisters harbor such angry thoughts as "My brother was seduced into giving up his life by a cynical and vulgar fantasy of virgins in Paradise"? Or perhaps, in a more analytic vein, did one of them think, "Young men in this society feel they have no future, so why shouldn't they give up their lives"? Those words, which would suggest a social, rather than a religious, context for the act, are never spoken, or even hinted at. Any kind of psychological explanation is ignored, too. The families utterly reject the word "suicide." The appropriate word is "martyr," a bomber's sister firmly tells Baer. Suicide, it seems, implies the possibility of unhappiness or compulsion, an emotional need that has not been met, whereas martyrdom, as the families present it, is always rationally chosen, and a gift to everyone. The religious language rules out any reason for doing something other than the single reason that is given (American fundamentalists talk the same way).

Hearing this, Baer doesn't push very hard. He's in a precarious situation; he enjoys, we imagine, no more than a limited welcome. But his failure to get anything more out of the families frustrates his viewers, and probably frustrates him, too. Near the end of the journey, chronicling Sunni car bombers in Iraq, he talks sorrowfully of Muslims killing Muslims, and he concludes that suicide bombing has lost any coherent political meaning and has taken on an irresistible life of its own as a glamorous cult. And the word he finishes with, to describe the intentions and results of this cult, is "chaos." But the movie suggests that some kinds of chaos, however much induced by professional terrorists, don't come about without the consent and support of deeply religious people. ♦

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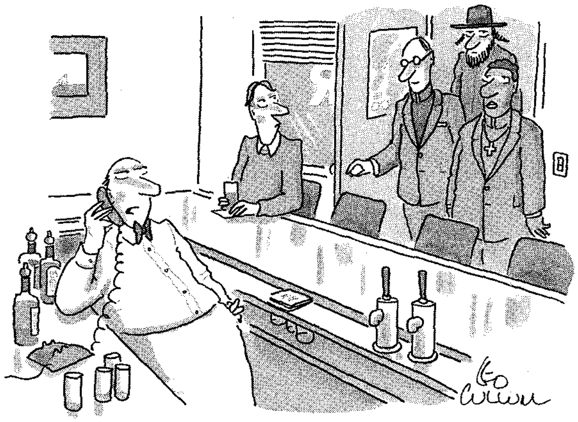
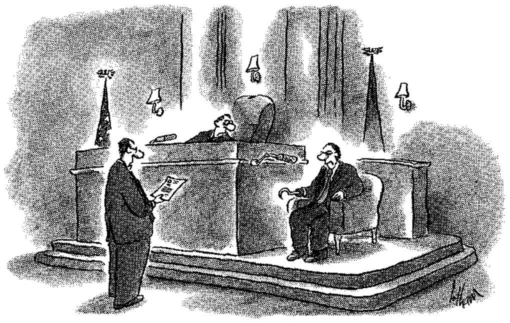
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Tom Cheney, must be received by Sunday, June 4th. Finalists in the May 22nd contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the June 19th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Stop me if you've heard this one."
Kelly Younger, Los Angeles, Calif.



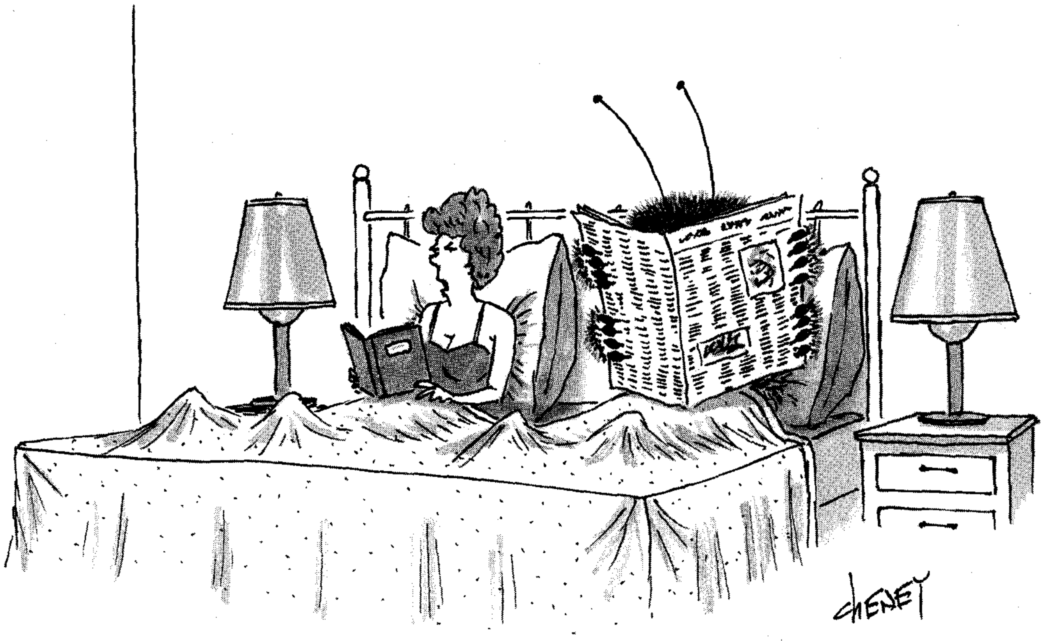
THE FINALISTS

"When did you first encounter my client's balloon?"
John Clabby, Philadelphia, Pa.

"Your Honor, may I have permission
not to approach the witness?"
George Carr, Fairview Park, Ohio

"Can you please identify which hand
was mistakenly amputated?"
Hilary Phillips, Washington, D.C.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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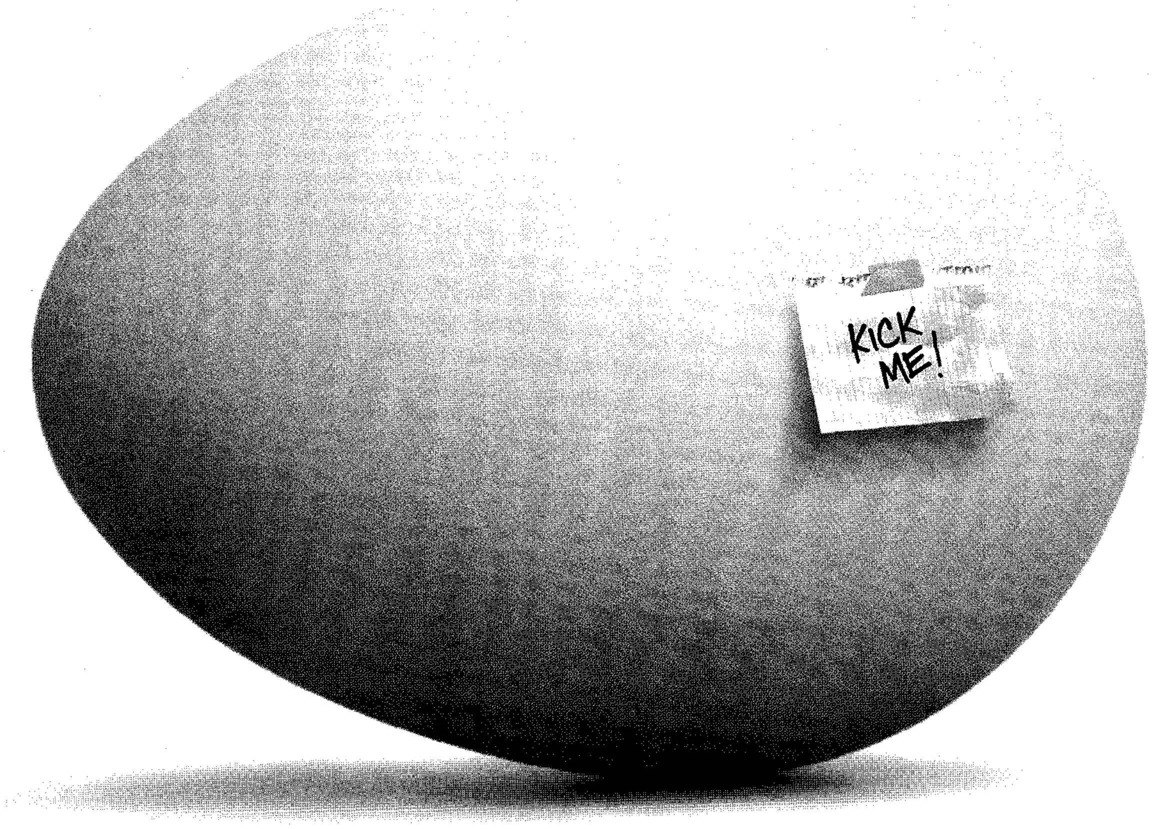

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